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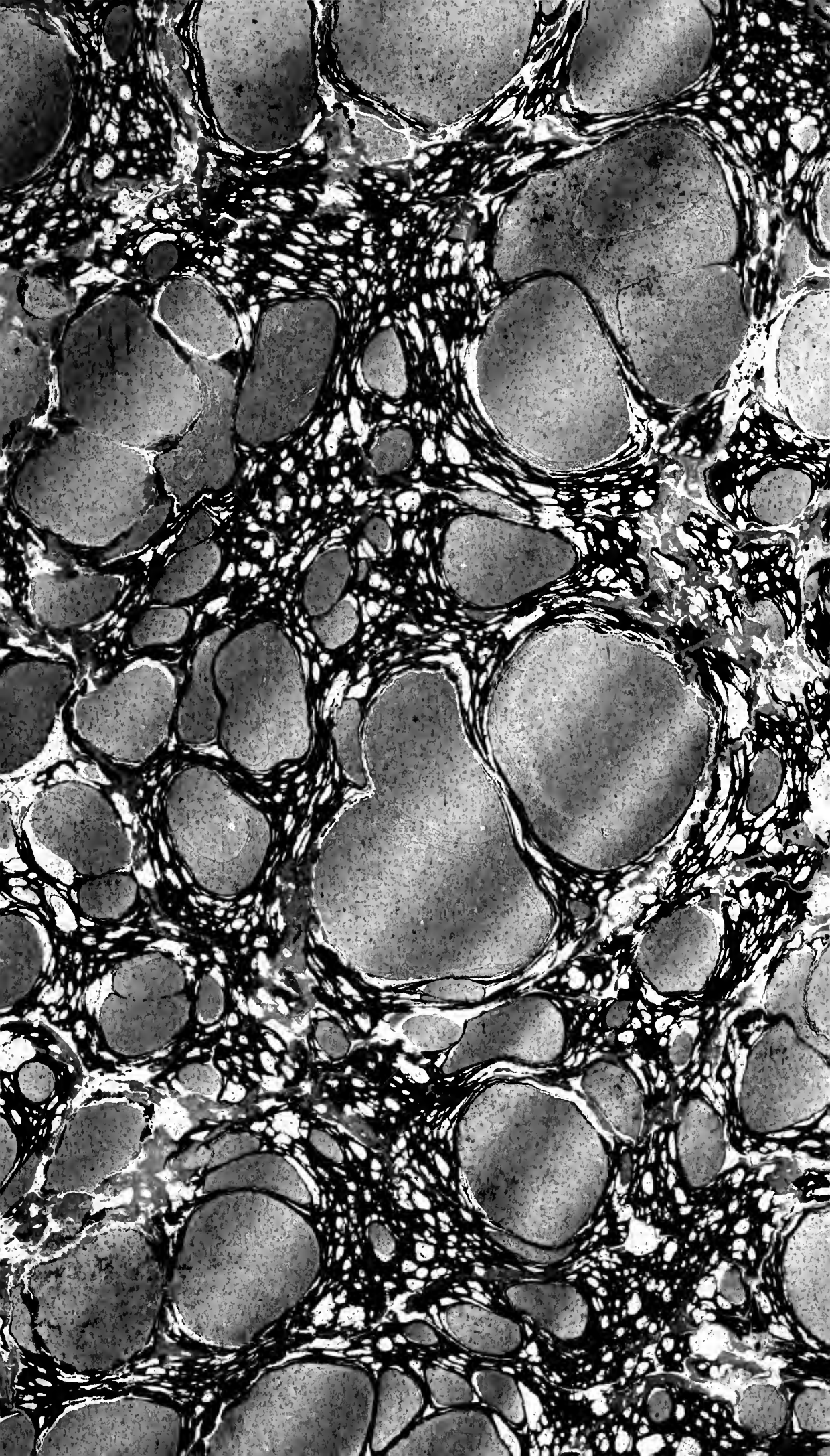

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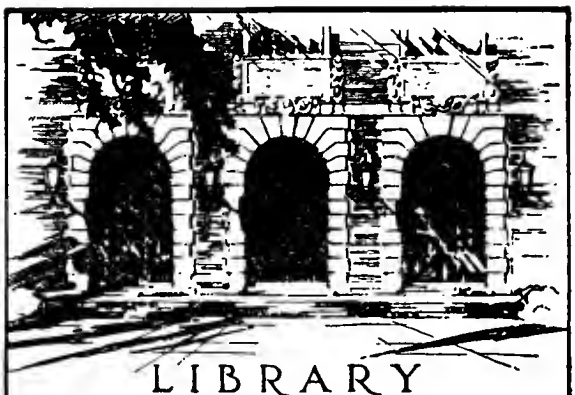

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THE

ROMANCE OF WAR:

OR,

THE HIGHLANDERS

IN FRANCE AND BELGIUM.

A SEQUEL TO

THE HIGHLANDERS IN SPAIN.

BY

JAMES GRANT, ESQ.

Late 62nd Regiment.

" In the garb of old Gaul, with the fire of old Rome,
From the heath-covered mountains of Scotia we come;
Our loud-sounding pipe breathes the true martial strain,
And our hearts still the old Scottish valour retain."

Lt.-Gen. Erskine.

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PREFACE.

Numerous inquiries having been made for the conclusion of "The Romance of War," it is now presented to the Public, whom the Author has to thank for the favourable reception given to the first three volumes of his Work.

In following out the adventures of the Highlanders, he has been obliged to lead them through the often-described field of Waterloo. But the reader will perceive that he has touched on the subject briefly; and, avoiding all general history, has confined himself, as much as possible, to the movements of Sir Dennis Pack's brigade.

Notwithstanding that so many able military narratives have of late years issued from the press, the Author believes that the present work is *the first* which has been almost exclusively dedicated to the adventures of a Highland regiment during the last war; the survivors of which he has to congratulate on their prospect of obtaining the long-withheld, but well-deserved, *medal.*

Gen. Res. Ray 26 Aug 1955 A. Russell = v.4, ac

Few—few indeed of the old corps are now alive; yet these all remember, with equal pride and sorrow,

> " How, upon bloody Quatre Bras,
> Brave CAMERON heard the wild hurra
> Of conquest as he fell;"

and, lest any reader may suppose that in these volumes the national enthusiasm of the Highlanders has been over-drawn, I shall state one striking incident which occurred at Waterloo.

On the advance of a heavy column of French infantry to attack La Haye Sainte, a number of the Highlanders sang the stirring verses of " Bruce's Address to his Army," which, at such a time, had a most powerful effect on their comrades; and long may such sentiments animate their representatives, as they are the best incentives to heroism, and to honest emulation!

EDINBURGH,
June 1847.

THE

ROMANCE OF WAR.

CHAPTER I.

TOULOUSE.

"One crowded hour of glorious life,
Is worth an age without a name!"

The long and bloody war of the Peninsula had now been brought to a final close, and the troops looked forward with impatience to the day of embarkation for their homes. The presence of the allied army was no longer necessary in France; but the British forces yet lingered about the Garonne, expecting the long-wished and long-looked for route for Britain. The Gordon Highlanders were quartered at Muret, a small town on the banks of the Garonne, and a few miles from Toulouse. One evening, while the mess were discussing, over their wine, the everlasting theme of the probable chances of the corps being ordered to Scotland, the

sound of galloping hoofs and the clank of accoutrements were heard in the street of the village. A serjeant of the First Dragoons, with the foam-bells hanging on his horse's bridle, reined up at the door of the inn where the officers of the Highlanders had established a temporary mess-house. Old Dugald Cameron was standing at the door, displaying his buirdly person to a group of staring villagers, with whom he was attempting to converse in a singular mixture of broad northern Scots, Spanish, and French, all of which his hearers found not very intelligible.

The horseman dashed up to the door with the splendid air of the true English dragoon, and with an importance which caused the villagers to shrink back. Inquiring for Colonel Cameron, he handed to Dugald two long official packets; and after draining a deep hornful of liquor which the Celt brought him, he wheeled his charger round, and rode slowly away.

"Letters frae the toon o' Toulouse, sir," said Dugald, as, with his flat bonnet under his arm, and smoothing down his white hair, he advanced to Fassifern's elbow, and laid the despatches before him; after which he retired a few paces, and waited to hear the contents, in which he considered he had as much interest as any one present. The clamour and laughter of the mess-room were instantly hushed, and every face grew grave, from the ample visage of Campbell, who was seated on the colonel's right

hand, down to the fair-cheeked ensigns, (or Johny Newcomes,) who always ensconced themselves at the foot of the table, to be as far away as possible from the colonel and seniors.

"Fill your glasses, gentlemen," said Cameron, as he broke the seal of the first despatch; "fill a bumper, and drink 'to a fair wind.' My life on't 'tis the route, and we shall soon have Old England on our lee!"

"Praise Heaven 'tis come at last!" said Campbell, filling up his glass with bright sparkling sherry. "I never hailed it with greater joy, even in Egypt. But what says Sir Arthur—the marquis, I mean?"

"'Tis the route!" replied Cameron, draining his glass. "To-morrow, at daybreak, we march for Toulouse."

"Hurrah!" said the major. "We shall have the purple heather under our brogues in a week more. Hoigh! Here's to the Highlandmen, shoulder to shoulder!" Every glass was reversed, while a round of applause shook the room.

"We embark on the Garonne," continued Cameron, consulting the document. "Flat-bottomed boats will convey us down the river, and we shall sail in transports for Cork."

"Hech! how, sirs! Cork?" exclaimed Campbell, in a tone of disappointment. "*Demonios!* as the dons say; and are we not going home to our own country,—to the land of the bannock and bonnet?"

"Ireland is our destination. A famous place to soldier in, as I know from experience, major."

"I love poor Paddy well enough," said Campbell: "who is there that would not, that has seen a charge of the Connaught Rangers, or the 87th? Regular devils they are for fighting. But we were sent home to braid Scotland after Egypt; and we saw service there, gentlemen. Old Ludovick Lisle, and Cameron there, could tell you that. But the other paper, colonel; what is it about?"

"A despatch for General the Condé Penne Villamur, at Elizondo. It is to be forwarded instantly by the first officer for duty: who is he?"

"Stuart," said the adjutant.

"The deuce take your memory!" said Stuart testily, as this announcement fell like a thunderbolt upon him; "you seem to have the roster all by heart. Colonel, is it possible that I am really to travel nearly a hundred miles, and to cross those abominable Pyrenees again, after fighting my way to Toulouse?"

"Without doubt," replied Fassifern, drily. "You will have the pleasure of seeing Spain once more, and again paying your respects to the gazelle-eyed señoritas and pompous señores."

"I would readily dispense with these pleasures. But might not Wellington have sent an aide or a dragoon with this despatch?"

"*He* seems not to think so. There is no help, Ronald, my man. You would not throw your duty on another. Obedience is the first— You know the adage: 'tis enough. You can rejoin us

at Toulouse, where we embark in eight days from this."

"Eight days?"

"Make good use of your nag; you will require one, of course. Campbell will lend you his spare charger 'Egypt,' as he styles it."

"With the utmost pleasure," said the major, filling up his glass. "But look well to him by the way, for he is an especial good piece of horse-flesh as ever was foaled, or any man found for nothing on that memorable day of June, on the plains of Vittoria. But when I remember the airing you took with my steed at Almarez, I cannot lend you Egypt without entertaining some secret fears of never beholding him again."

"Have no fears for Egypt, major," said Ronald, laughing. "I will restore him without turning a hair of his glossy coat."

"Then, Stuart, you must march forthwith," said Cameron; "the marquis's despatch must be carried onward without delay. You must reach St. Gaudens by sunrise."

Dugald was despatched to desire Jock Pentland, the major's bat-man, to caparison Egypt; and mean while Stuart hurried to his billet, where he hastily selected a few necessaries for his journey, and packed them in a horse valise. In case of accidents, he indited a hasty letter for Lochisla; but, for reasons which will be given in another chapter, it never reached those for whom it was destined.

To his servant, Allan Warristoun, poor Evan's successor, he abandoned the care of his baggage, desiring him to have it all in readiness against the hour of march on the morrow. He belted his sword and dirk tightly to his waist, and examined the holsters, to see if the pistols were freshly flinted and in good order; after which he examined his ammunition, well knowing that the more lead bullets and the less loose cash he had about him, the better for travelling on such unsafe ground as the Lower Pyrenees. He remembered that the whole of these waste places were infested by hordes of lawless banditti, composed of all the rascal crew of Spain,—guerillas, whose trade was at at end, broken or deserted soldiers, unfrocked monks, fugitive *presidiarios* or convicts, bravoes, *valientes*, and vagabonds of every kind, with which the long war, the absence of order and law, together with the loose state of Spanish morals, had peopled every part of the country. While the remembrance of these gentlemen passed through his mind, Stuart again examined his arms and horse-equipage carefully, and mounting, rode forth along the dark, straggling street of Muret. From the mess-room window there was handed to him a parting bumper of sherry, which he drank in his saddle.

"Good-bye, Lisle!" said he, waving his hand; "bid Virginia adieu for me. And now good-bye, lads; good-bye to ye all;" and, striking spurs into Egypt, he galloped off.

"He is a fine fellow, and keeps his seat as well as

any cavalier of the *Prado* at Madrid," said the major, watching Stuart's retreating figure as long as he could see it by the star-light. "He is a fine fellow; and I wish he was safe back again among us. He has a long and a perilous path before him, over these d—d Pyrenees; and ten to one he never returns again from among those black-browed and uncanny dons. We all know Spanish ingratitude, sirs!" The worthy major knew not how prophetically he spoke.

Next morning the regiment marched to Toulouse and remained eight days, awaiting the arrival of the boats and other small craft to convey them down the Garonne, which becomes navigable at a short distance from the city.

The eight days passed away, and Ronald Stuart did not return. The eventful day arrived,—the day of embarkation for home, and the regiment paraded on the river side without him. The officers glanced darkly at each other, and the colonel shook his head sorrowfully, as if he deemed that all was not right; and a murmured curse on the Spaniards was muttered among the soldiers. The whole regiment, from Fassifern down to the youngest drum-boy, regretted his absence, which gave room for so many disagreeable constructions and surmises. Other corps were parading at the same time, and in the stir, bustle, and confusion of embarking men and horses, baggage, women, and children, his absence was forgotten for a time. The cheers of the soldiers and the

din of various bands were heard everywhere. The time was one of high excitement, and joy shone on every bronzed face as boat after boat got under way, and, with its freight, moved slowly down the Garonne,—"the silvery Garonne," the windings of which soon hid the bridge, the spires, the grey old university, and the beautiful forests of Toulouse.

CHAPTER II.

ADVENTURES.

——— "Turn thy horse;
Death besets thy onward track.
Come no further,—quickly back!"
Aikin's Poems, 1791.

Stuart departed from Muret in no pleasant mood, having a conviction that he was the most unfortunate fellow in the army; because, when any disagreeable duty was to be performed, by some strange fatality the lot always fell upon him. But his displeasure evaporated as the distance between Muret and himself increased. It was a clear and beautiful night. Millions of sparklers studded the firmament, and, although no moon was visible, the scenery around was distinctly discernible. Afar off lay Toulouse, the direction of which was marked only by the hazy halo of light around it, arising from amidst the bosky forests, which extend over nearly a hundred thousand acres of ground.

Before him spread a clear and open country, over which his horse was now carrying him at a rapid pace. It was midnight before the lights of Muret

vanished behind him. The road became more lonely, and no sound broke upon the silence of the way, save the clang of Egypt's hoofs, ringing with a sharp iron sound on the hard-trodden road.

After riding nearly twenty miles, he found himself becoming tired and drowsy; and dismounting, he led his horse into a copse by the road-side, where, fastening the bridle to a tree, he lay down on the dewy sward, and, placing his claymore under his head, fell fast asleep. Before sunrise he was again in his saddle, and, without breaking his fast, reached the town of Saint Gaudens, on the Garonne, forty-four miles from Toulouse. Unwilling to waste farther the strength of the noble animal which had borne him so far, and with such speed, he halted at Saint Gaudens for twelve hours, and again set forward on the direct road for the province of Bearn.

The well-known chain of the Pyrenees, the scene of so many a recent contest, began to rise before him, and as he proceeded, every object which met his view became more familiar.

On nearing the Pass of Roncesvalles, he reached the block-house which his light company had garrisoned and defended so stoutly. It was now falling into ruin, and the skeletons of the French were lying around it, with the rank dog-grass sprouting among their mouldering bones. A ghastly sight!—but many such occurred as he journeyed among the mountains. Near the block-house he fell in with an encampment of *gitanos*, or gipsies, a people whose

ferocity is equalled only by their cunning and roguery. They were at dinner, and bade him welcome to the feast, which consisted of broiled rabbits, olives, rice, and *bacalao*, with wine—stolen of course—to wash it down. He took his share of the viands seated by a fire, around which the ragged wayfarers crowded, male and female; but he was very well pleased when he took his departure from these singular people, who would not accept of a single maravedi for his entertainment.

Near midnight he arrived at the village of Roncesvalles, which consists of one straggling street, closed by an arched gateway at each end. The barriers were shut, and no admittance was given. He thundered loudly, first at one gate and then at the other; but he was unheard or uncared for by the drowsy porters, who occupied the houses above the arches. He therefore prepared to pass the night in the open air, which, although nothing new to a campaigner, was sufficiently provoking on that occasion, especially as a shower was beginning to descend, and sheet lightning, red and flaming, shot at times across the distant sky, revealing the peaks of the mountains, and the moaning voice of the wind announced a tempestuous night. Wishing the warders of Roncesvalles in a hotter climate than Spain, he looked about for some place of shelter, and perceived, not far off, a solitary little chapel, or oratory, which was revealed by the pale altar-lights twinkling through its tinted windows and open doorway.

In this rude edifice he resolved to take shelter, rather than pass the night in the open air; and just as he gained its arched porch, the storm, which had long been threatening, burst forth with sudden and appalling fury. The wind howled in the pass, and swept over the mountains like a tornado, and with a terrible sound, as if, in the words of a Gaelic bard, the spirits of the storm were shrieking to each other. The forked lightning shot athwart the sky, cleaving the masses of cloud, and the rattling rain thundered furiously on the chapel roof and windows, as if to beat the little fabric to the earth. His horse was startled by the uproar of the elements, and snorted, grew restive, and shot fire from his prominent eyes as the passing gleams illuminated the porch, within which Stuart had stabled him by fastening the bridle to the figure of an old saint or apostle that presided over a stone font, from which the old troop-horse soon sucked up the holy water. Ronald wrapped a cloak round him, and flung himself on the stone pavement of the chapel, to rest his aching limbs, which were beginning to stiffen with so long a journey on horseback.

The building was totally destitute of ornament, and its rude construction gave evidence of its great antiquity. There were several shrines around it, with wax tapers flickering before them, revealing the strange little monsters in wood or stone which represented certain saints. In front of one of these knelt a stout, but wild-looking Spanish peasant, de-

voutly praying and telling over his chaplet. The entrance of Stuart caused him hurriedly to start,—to snatch his broad-leaved hat from the floor, to grasp the haft of his dagger, and glance round him with frowning brow and eyes gleaming with apprehension. But on perceiving the uniform of the intruder, his dark features relaxed into a smile; he bowed his head politely, and resumed his orisons, which Stuart never interrupted, although they lasted for a weary hour. There was something very grotesque in the aspect of one particular image, which appeared to be thrust unceremoniously into a dark niche, where no taper burned; from which Ronald inferred that the saint had no worshippers, or was not a favourite in the neighbourhood of Roncesvalles. The appearance of the image was calculated to excite laughter and derision, rather than piety or awe. It resembled the figure of Johnny Wilkes or Guy Fawkes, rather than a grim and ghostly saint. The effigy was upwards of six feet high, and had a painted mask, well be-whiskered, and surmounted by a cocked hat. It was arrayed in leather breeches and jack-boots, a blue uniform coat, and tarnished epaulets. A sash encircled its waist, and in it were stuck a pair of pistols and a sabre. Its *tout ensemble* was quite ludicrous, as it stood erect in the gloomy niche of the solemn little chapel, and was seen by the "dim religious light" of distant tapers.

With the hilt of his broad-sword under his head for a pillow, Stuart lay on the pavement, and viewed

this singular apparition with considerable amusement; and if he restrained a violent inclination to laugh, it was only from a reluctance to offend the peasant, who was praying before an image which, by its long robe and bunch of rusty keys, seemed meant for a representation of San Pedro.

From the devotee, who, when his prayers were ended, seated himself by his side, Stuart learned that the strange image represented St. Anthony of Portugal, one of those redoubtable seven champions whose "history" has made such a noise in the world from time immemorial. Notwithstanding the mist which ignorance, superstition, and priestcraft had cast over his mind, the sturdy *paisano* laughed till the chapel rang again at the appearance of the Portuguese patron, and acquainted Stuart with some pleasant facts, which accounted for the military garb of the saint. By virtue of a decree in that behalf on the part of his Holiness, St. Anthony was, in 1706, formally *enlisted* into the Portuguese army; and in the same year received the rank of captain,—so rapid was his promotion. His image was always clad in successive uniforms as he was hurried through the different grades, until he reached the rank of Marshal-general of the armies of Portugal and Algarve,—a post which, I believe, he yet holds, with a pension of one hundred and fifty ducats per annum, which every year is punctually deposited, in a splendid purse, in the Chapel-Royal, by the Portuguese sovereign. Awful was the wrath, and terrible

were the denunciations and holy indignation, when a cannon-ball carried off the head and cocked hat of the unfortunate image, which had been placed in an open carriage on one occasion, when *commanding* the Portuguese army in battle.

The image in the chapel at Roncesvalles had been placed there by the soldiers of the condé d'Amarante's brigade, the condé himself furnishing the saint with some of his cast uniform; but, since the departure of the Portuguese, the shrine had been totally deserted, as no true Spaniard would bend his knee to a Lusitanian saint. Such was the account given by the peasant, and it illustrates rather oddly the religious feelings of the Portuguese. After sharing together the contents of a flask of brandy, with which Ronald had learned to provide himself, they composed themselves to sleep. The peasant, who had also been shut out of Roncesvalles, drew his broad *sombrero* over his dusky visage, and, wrapping his brown mantle around him, laid his head against the base of a column, and fell fast asleep. Those suspicions which a long intercourse with Spaniards had taught Stuart to entertain of every casual acquaintance, kept him for some time from sleep. He narrowly watched his olive-cheeked companion, and it was not until, from his hard breathing, he was sure he slept, that he too resigned himself to the drowsy deity. He awoke about sunrise, and found that his companion had departed. A sudden misgiving shot across his mind, and he

sprang to the porch to look for his horse, which stood there, fair and sleek, as he left him on the preceding evening. He took him by the bridle, and advanced towards Roncesvalles.

The storm, and all traces of it, had passed away. The sky was clear and sunny, and the distant mountains mingled with its azure. The air was laden with rich perfume from little shrubs, of which I know not the name, but which flourish everywhere over the Peninsula; and every bush and blade of grass glittered like silver with the moisture which bedewed them. The gates of Roncesvalles stood open, and, passing through one of the archways, Ronald asked the first person he met whether there was an inn, café, *taberna*, or any house of entertainment, where he could procure refreshment for himself and horse, but was informed that the wretched mountain-village could boast of none. The man to whom he spoke was a miserably-clad peasant, and, like most Spanish villagers, appeared to belong to no trade or profession. He was returning from the public fountain with water, which he carried on his head, in a huge brown jug. He seemed both surprised and pleased to be accosted by a British officer, and said that if the noble *caballero* would honour him by coming to his house, he would do his best to provide refreshment. This offer Stuart at once accepted, and placing a dollar in the hand of the *aguadore*, desired him to lead the way. After seeing his horse fed and watered, and after discussing

breakfast, which consisted of a miserable mess of milk, peas, goats'-flesh, and roasted *castanos*, he mounted, and again went forth on his mission, glad to leave Roncesvalles far behind him. He expected to reach Elizondo before night; but soon found that his horse had become so jaded and worn out, that the hope was vain. The pace of the animal had become languid and slow; his eyes had lost their fire, and his neck and ears began to droop.

That he might advance faster, Stuart was fain to lead him by the bridle up the steep and winding tracks by which his journey lay. Once only Egypt showed some signs of his former spirit. In a narrow dell between two hills, in a rugged gorge like the bed of a departed river, an iron howitzer and a few shells lay rusting and half sunk in the earth: close by lay the skeletons of a man and a horse, adding sadly to the effect of the naked and silent wilderness around. At the sudden sight of these ghastly objects lying among the weeds and long grass, the steed snorted, shyed, and then sprung away at a speed which soon left the dell, and what it contained, miles behind.

As he rode through a solitary place, Stuart was startled on perceiving a party of men, to the number of fifteen or twenty, all well armed and on horseback, rising as it seemed from the earth, or appearing suddenly above the surface successively, as spectres rise through the stage. The fellows were all gaily attired in gaudy jackets, red sashes, and

high-crowned hats; but the appearance of their arms, a long Spanish gun slung over the back, a cutlass, and double brace of pistols, together with various packages of goods with which their horses were laden, gave them the aspect of a band of robbers. Stuart thought of the gang of Captain Rolando, as he saw them appearing from the bowels of the earth, within about twenty paces of where he stopped his horse. He next thought of his own safety, and had drawn forth his pistols, when one of the strangers perceiving him, waved his hat, crying, "*Amigos, señor, amigos!*" and, to put a bold face on the matter, Ronald rode straight towards him. They proved to be a party of *contrabandistas*, travelling to Vittoria with a store of chocolate, soap, butter, cigars, &c., which they had been purchasing in France. A sort of hatchway, or trap-door, of turf was laid over the mouth of the cavern from which they arose; after which they set off at full speed for Errazu.

Ronald was very well pleased to see them depart, as *contrabandistas* are, at best, but indifferent characters, although few travellers are more welcome at Spanish inns, where they may generally be seen at the door, or in the yard, recounting to their laughing auditors strange tales of adventures which they had encountered in the course of their roving and romantic life; and, as they are always gaily attired, they are generally favourites with the peasant-girls on the different roads they frequent. Their

cavern, which Ronald felt a strong wish to explore, was probably some deserted mine, or one of those subterranean abodes dug by the Spaniards in the days of the Moors, and now appropriated by these land-smugglers as a place for holding their wares. Had Ronald worn any other garb than that of a British officer, the contraband gentry might, by an ounce bullet, have secured for ever his silence regarding their retreat, but they well knew that it mattered not to him: so, after an interchange of a few civilities and cigars, they rode off at a gallop, without once looking behind them.

As he proceeded on his way, the scenery became more interesting, the landscape being interspersed with all that can render it beautiful. A ruined chapel towered on a green eminence above a tufted grove, through which swept a brawling mountain torrent, spanned by a pointed arch; while a cascade appeared below, where the stream, grappling and jarring with the rocks that interrupted its course, rushed in a sheet of foam to a cleft in the earth many feet beneath. Around were groves of the olive-tree, with its soft green leaves and bright yellow flowers; and beyond was Errazu, with its vine-covered cottages, its larger mansions of brick and plaster, with heavy-tiled roofs and broad projecting eaves, its great old monastery and its church spire, the vane of which was gleaming in the light of the setting sun. As he was travelling on duty, Stuart was entitled to billets; he therefore set about

procuring one. The alcalde was at confession, and the *escrivano*, to whom he applied, gave him orders for a quarter in the house of a solitary widow lady, who, with her daughter, resided in a lonely house at the end of the town.

Considering their circumstances, this was the last house upon which a billet should have been given; but the escrivano had a piece of revenge to gratify. The old lady was a widow of a syndic,—a magistrate chosen by the people, like the Roman tribunes,—who, during his whole life, had been at feud with him, and the escrivano hoped that Stuart's being billeted there would give rise to some pleasant piece of scandal, for the benefit of the gossiping old maids and duennas of Errazu.

The appearance of the widow's mansion did not prepossess Ronald much in its favour. The French had not left Errazu unscathed on their retreat through it; and, like many others, the domicile of Donna Aminta della Ronda showed signs of their vindictive feeling. One half had suffered from fire, and was in ruins; but two apartments were yet habitable, and into one of these Stuart was shown by an aged and saffron-coloured female domestic, to whom he presented the billet-order, by which he was entitled to occupy the best room and best bed in the house. The chamber, which was paved with tiles, was on the ground-floor; the window was glazed, but the walls were in a deplorable state of dilapidation; and many choice pieces of French wit appeared scribbled

on various parts of the plaster. Among other things was a copy of verses addressed to Donna Aminta, written in rather indelicate French, and signed "M. de Mesmai, 10th Cuirassiers, or Devil's Own," which informed Stuart that his former acquaintance had once occupied that apartment.

Two antique chairs, high-backed and richly carved, a massive oak table, and a brass candlestick, composed the furniture. A chamber, containing an old-fashioned bed, with crimson feathers and hangings, opened out of this apartment, with which it communicated by means of an arch, from which the French had torn the door, probably for fuel. But this snug couch did not appear destined for Stuart, as the old domestic laid a paillasse upon the tiled floor for his use; and placing wine, cigars, and a light upon the table, laid the poker and shovel crosswise, and withdrew, leaving him to his own reflections.

He was somewhat displeased at not being received by the ladies in person, especially as the escrivano had informed him, with a sly look, that the youngest possessed considerable attractions; but, consoling himself with the wine and cigars, he resolved to care not a jot about their discourtesy. After he had amused himself by thoroughly inspecting every nook and corner of the room, and grown weary of conning over the "History of the famous Preacher, Friar Gerund de Campazas," which he found when ransacking the bed-closet, he began to think of retiring to rest. He debated with himself for a moment

which berth to take possession of, because by his billet he was entitled to the best bed the house contained; and the four-post and paillasse seemed the very antipodes of each other. But his doubts were resolved at once by the sudden entrance of the ladies, who sailed into the room with their long trains and flowing veils, and bowing, coldly bid him "*Buena noche, señor!*" as they retired to their bed-room. Ye gods! a bed-room destitute of door, and a foreign *oficial* to sleep in the next room! Stuart was puzzled, dumb-foundered in fact, and his Scottish modesty was quite shocked. But, lighting another cigar, he affected to read very attentively "Friar Gerund de Campazas," and wondered how all this was to end; while the ladies, favoured by the gloom of the chamber, undressed and betook themselves to their couch, around which they drew the dark and massive folds of the drapery. Ronald laid down the book, and stared about him. There was something very peculiar in the affair, and it outdid the most singular Spanish stories he had ever heard related, even at the mess.

The elder lady had nothing very enchanting about her, certainly; but Ronald's keen eye had observed that the young donna had a melting black Spanish eye, a cherry lip, and white hand. He thought of these things and glanced furtively towards the mysterious closet, where the black outline of the couch, surmounted by its plumage, seemed like that of a hearse or mausoleum. Not a sound came from it

after Donna Aminta had mumbled her *ave;* but the trampling of heavy feet arrested Stuart's attention; the door opened, and two tall and muscular Spaniards entered. One wore a broad hat, with a sprig of *romero* stuck in the band of it, as a guard against evil spirits and danger. The other wore a long cap of yellow cotton. They were shirtless and shoeless, and their ragged cotton breeches and *zumarra* jackets displayed, through various holes, their dark and swarthy skin, giving them a wild and savage appearance, which their brown bull-like necks and ferocious visages, fringed with masses of dark hair, did not belie. As usual, each was girt about the middle by a yellow sash; but, stuck in it, each had a dagger and brace of pistols. They were beetle-browed and most cut-throat looking fellows. At first sight Ronald knew them to be *valientes,*—villains whose poniards are ever at the service of any base employer who pays well. He started up on their entering and drew his sword an inch or so from the sheath. The fellows smiled grimly at the demonstration; upon which, he inquired sternly the reason of their intrusion, and why thus armed?

"Donna Aminta can best answer your questions," answered one fellow with surly impudence, as they swaggered into the bed-chamber. With his hand on his claymore Ronald strode towards them.

"Stand, señor cavalier!" said the one who had spoken; "stand! We seek not to quarrel with you; but life is sweet, and if we are set upon— You

understand us: the good lady shall see that we are worthy of our wages. We mount guard on her chamber: cross this line," added he, drawing one on the tiles with his poniard; "cross this line, and, *Santo demonio!* we will whet our daggers on your backbone."

Insolent as this reply was, Stuart resolved to put up with the affront rather than come to blows with two desperadoes, whose fire-arms gave them such advantage. He deeply regretted that he had left his loaded pistols in the holsters of the saddle, and remembering that he was alone, and among jealous strangers, he thought that a brawl would be well avoided. The bravoes seated themselves on the floor within the ladies' chamber, and remained perfectly quiet, without stirring or speaking; but their fierce dark eyes seemed to be watching the stranger keenly. Ronald retired to his paillasse, and laid his drawn dirk and claymore beside him, ready to grasp them on the least alarm. He remained watching the intruders by the light of the candle, until it flickered down in the socket and expired, leaving the place involved in deep gloom. The silence of the chamber was broken only by the real or pretended snoring of these modern Cids, who had so suddenly become the guardians of the ladies' bower. When he first committed himself to his miserable couch, Ronald had determined to lie awake; but, growing weary of listening and watching in the dark, he dropped insensibly asleep, and did

not awaken until the morning was far advanced. The instant sleep departed from his eyelids, the remembrance of last night flashed upon his memory. He rose and looked about him. The bravoes had withdrawn; the ladies also were gone, and the couch was tenantless. Sheathing his weapons, he drained the wine-jar; and snatching up his bonnet, he departed from the house unseen by its inmates, whom he bequeathed to the devil for their discourtesy.

Fetching his horse from the stable of the *escrivano*, where he had left it overnight, he again resumed his journey, feeling heartily tired of Spain, and wishing himself again at Toulouse, where his comrades were awaiting the order to embark.

CHAPTER III.

THE LADY OF ELIZONDO.

"A love devoid of guile and sin;
A love for ever kind and pure,—
A love to suffer and endure;
Unalterably firm and great,
Amid the angry storms of fate;
For ever young, for ever new,
For ever passionate and true."

The Salamandrine.

A RIDE of a few leagues brought Stuart to Elizondo. On entering the market-place, two Spanish soldiers, placed as sentinels before the door of a large mansion-house, attracted his attention. He was informed that it was the residence of the Condé Penne Villamur. It stood at the corner of the old market-place, to which one of its fronts looked; the other faced the *Puerta del Sol,* where the superior classes of the inhabitants met to promenade and converse, between ten and twelve in the forenoon.

He dismounted, and, ascending a splendid staircase, was ushered into a handsome apartment, the lofty ceiling of which was covered with antique carving and gilding. As usual in Spanish houses,

the furniture was very antique, and the chairs and hangings were of damask cloth. The condé, a grim old fellow, whose grey wiry moustaches were turned up to the tops of his ears, lay back in an easy chair, with his legs stretched out lazily at full length under the table, upon which stood wine-decanters, and fruit, &c. &c. A young lady, either his wife or daughter, sat in that part of the room where the floor was raised, as if for a throne, about a foot above the rest. She sat working at a new mantilla, which she was embroidering on a frame. Her feet were placed on the wooden rail of a *brasero* or pan filled with charcoal, which rendered the atmosphere of the room very unpleasant to one unaccustomed to such an uncomfortable contrivance. When Stuart entered, the señora merely bowed, and continued her work, blushing as young ladies generally do when a handsome young officer appears unexpectedly. The count snatched from his face the handkerchief which during his *siesta* had covered it, and bowed twice or thrice with the most formal gravity of an old Castilian, stooping until the bullion epaulets of his brown regimentals became reversed. Stuart delivered the despatch with which he had ridden so far, wondering what it might contain. The condé handed him a chair, and a glass of Malaga; after which he begged pardon, and proceeded to con over the papers, without communicating their contents. But in consequence of the complacent smile which overspread and unbent his grim features, Ronald supposed that

the envelope contained only some complimentary address to the Spanish forces. And he was right in his conjecture, as, six months afterwards, he had the pleasure, or rather displeasure, of perusing it in a number of the *Gaceta de la Regencia*.

"*Diavolo!*" thought he, as he bowed to *la señora*, and emptied his glass; "have I ridden from the Garonne to the Pyrenees with a paper full of staff-office nonsense!"

Villamur read over the document two or three times, often begging pardon for the liberty he took; and after inquiring about the health of Lord Wellington, and discussing the probabilities of having a continuance of fine weather, as if he kept a score of barometers and thermometers, he ended by a few other common-place observations, and covering up his face with his handkerchief, began to relapse insensibly into the dozing and dreamy state from which Stuart had roused him. Irritated at treatment so different from what he expected, and which an officer of the most trusty ally of Spain deserved, Ronald at once rose, and bowing haughtily to the lady, withdrew; the condé coolly permitting him to do so, saying, that Micer Bartolmé, the alcalde, who kept the faro-table opposite, would give him an order for a billet.

"Confound his Spanish pride, his insolence, presumption, and ingratitude!" thought Stuart, bitterly. "'Tis a pretty display of hospitality this,—to one who has looked on the slaughter of Vittoria, of

Orthes, and Toulouse! But my duty is over, thank Heaven! and to-morrow my horse's tail will be turned on this most grateful soil of Spain."

Micer Bartolmé expressed much joy at the sight of the red coat, and would have invited the wearer to remain in his own house, probably for the purpose of fleecing him at faro; but it so happened that, at the moment, he was not exactly master of his own premises. His good lady had just brought him a son and heir, ten minutes before Ronald's arrival, and the mansion had been taken violent possession of by all the female gossips, wise women, and duennas of Elizondo, by whom the worthy alcalde was treated as a mere intruder, being pushed, ordered, and brow-beaten, until he was fain to quit the field and take up his quarters with his neighbour, an *escrivano*. An order for a billet was therefore given on the mansion of a cavalier, who bore the sounding name of Don Alvarado de Castellon de la Plana, so styled from the place of his birth, the 'castle on the plain,' an old Moorish town of Valencia.

He received Ronald with all due courtesy, and directed servants to look after the wants of his jaded horse. He was a dissipated but handsome-looking man, about thirty years of age. He wore his hair in long flowing locks, and two short black tufts curled on his upper lip. In its cut, his dress closely resembled that of an English gentleman; but his surtout of green cloth was braided with gold lace, adorned with a profusion of jingling bell-buttons, and girt about

the waist by a broad belt, which was clasped by a large buckle, and sustained a short ivory-hilted and silver-sheathed stiletto. A broad shirt-collar, edged with jagged lace, spread over his shoulder, and when his high-flapped Spanish hat was withdrawn, a broad and noble forehead was displayed; but there was an expression in its contracted lines, which told of a heart stern, proud, and daring. His dark eyebrows were habitually knit, and formed a continued but curved line above his nose; and there was a certain bold and boisterous swagger in his demeanour, which Ronald supposed he had acquired while serving as a cavalier of fortune in the guerilla band of the ferocious Don Julian Sanchez.

In every thing the reverse of him appeared his wife, a lady so gentle, so timid, that she scarcely ever raised her soft dark eyes when Ronald addressed her. She was very pale; her soft cheek was whiter than her hand, and contrasted strongly with the hue of her ringlets; and in her beautiful but evidently withering features, there was such an expression of heart-broken sadness, that she at once won all the sympathy and compassion which Stuart's gallant heart was capable of yielding. Her husband, for some reasons known only to himself, treated her with a marked coldness and even harshness, which he cared not to conceal, even before their military guest.

The poor timid woman seemed to shrink within herself whenever she found the keen stern eye of Alvarado turned upon her. Often during the even-

ing repast, which had been hastily prepared for Ronald, and with which, in consequence of the host's behaviour, he was disgusted,—often did he feel inclined to smite him on the mouth, for the unkind things which he addressed to his drooping wife.

In truth, they were a singular couple as it had ever been his fortune to meet with. Although there was no duenna about the establishment, thus affording a rare example of love and fidelity in the lady, yet her husband seemed to take a strange and most unmanly pleasure in mortifying her, and endeavouring to render her contemptible in the estimation of the stranger. The latter, although he felt very uncomfortable, affected not to be conscious of Alvarado's conduct, and conversed with ease on various topics, and generally of the long war which had been so successfully terminated. When the meal was ended, Donna Ximena bowed, and faltering out "*Addios, señores! buena noche!*" withdrew, leaving her ungracious husband and his guest over their wine.

Over his flasks of rich *Ciudad Real* the don grew animated, and retailed many anecdotes of scenes he had witnessed, and adventures in which he had borne a part, while serving with Don Julian Sanchez. Some of these stories he would have done well to have suppressed, as they would have baffled even the imagination of the most bloody-minded romancer to conceive. But a revengeful and hot-brained Spaniard surpasses every other man in cruelty. He said that, like the parents of Julian Sanchez, his father, mother,

and sister had been murdered by the French, and on their graves he had sworn by cross and dagger to revenge them; and terribly had he kept his formidable vow. During the whole of the war of independence, he had never yielded quarter or mercy, but put the wounded and captives to that death which he said their atrocities deserved. He boasted that his stiletto had drunk the blood of a hundred hearts, and in support of many avowals of instances of particular ferocity, he cited the *Gaceta de Valencia*, in the columns of which, he said, his deeds and patriotism had all been duly extolled. Disgusted with his host, and the strange tenour of his conversation, Ronald soon withdrew to rest, pleading as an excuse for so doing, his desire to commence his journey to Toulouse early on the morrow, which he must needs do, if he would be in time for the embarkation of his regiment.

The furniture and ornaments of his sleeping apartment were richer and more beautiful than he could have expected them to be on the southern side of the Pyrenees; but the plunder of Gascon châteaux, when guerilla bands made occasional descents to the North, served to replenish many of the mansions that had been ravaged and ruined by the troops of France when retreating. The bed-hangings were of white satin, fringed with silver; the chairs were covered with crimson velvet, and yet bore on the back the gilded coat-armorial of some French family. A splendid clock, covered by a glass, ticked upon an

antique mantel-piece of carved cedar; and several gloomy portraits of severe-looking old cavaliers, in the slashed doublets, high ruffs, and peaked beards worn in Spain a hundred years before, hung around the walls. The tall casemented windows came down to the tiles of the floor, and through the half-open hangings were seen the bright stars, the blue sky, the long dark vistas of the tiled roofs, and the church-spire of Elizondo.

On the table stood a showy Parisian lamp, surmounted by the Eagle of the emperor, which spread its gilt wings over a rose-coloured glass globe, from which a soft light was diffused through the apartment. Throwing himself into an easy chair with a most *nonchalant* manner, Stuart made a careless survey of the place.

"Well, Ronald Stuart; truly this is a snug billet!" he soliloquized, as he placed his feet on the rail of the charcoal *brasero*, which smouldered and glowed on the hearth. "Rich in the plunder of France, 'tis as splendid a billet as Campbell's could have been, when quartered in the harem of Alexandria. But assuredly this Alvarado de—de Castellon de la Plana is, by his own account, one of the most savage rascals unhung in Spain; and yet I am his guest, and am to sleep beneath his roof for this night. And then Donna Ximena,—by Jove! was that gentle creature mine, how I would love and cherish her! Her rogue of a husband deserves to be flogged, and pickled afterward!"

His eye fell on the timepiece, the hour-hand of which pointed to eleven, and he began to think of retiring. Unbuckling his weapons, he laid them on a chair at the bed-side, to be at hand in case of any alarm; and then, with the caution of an old soldier, he turned to examine the means of securing the door, which was furnished with a strong but rude iron bolt, which he shot into its place.

Two persons, whom for some time past he had heard conversing in an adjoining room, now suddenly raised their voices.

"It shall be so. I tell you, Señor Don Alvarado—"

"Peace! Would you awaken the cavalier in the next room?"

"And who is he?" cried the other furiously; "this cavalier, of whom you have spoken thrice, who is *he?* But it matters not: let him keep his ears to himself, if he is given to lie awake. Listeners seldom hear aught that is pleasant for themselves. Said you an officer of Wellington's army? He, too, shall die, if he ventures to cross my path this night!"

"Carlos! Madman! Let me beseech you not to raise your voice thus!" intreated Alvarado in a whisper.

But Stuart had heard more than enough to whet his curiosity. Indeed, owing to the tenor of those observations,—of which he had been an involuntary listener,—he considered himself entitled to sift the matter to the utmost. Examining the partition,

which consisted only of lath and plaster, he discovered, near the ceiling, a small hole in the stucco cornice which surrounded the top of the wall.

"Stratagems are fair in war," thought he, as he mounted upon a side table and placed his eye to the orifice, through which he obtained a complete survey of the next apartment. A lustre hung from the roof, and its light revealed Alvarado and Don Carlos Avallo,—a young cavalier, about three-and-twenty years of age, whom he remembered to have met at Aranjuez and other places. Alvarado, who was intreating him to lower his voice, was standing half undrest,—at least without his vest, doublet, and girdle, as if he had been preparing for rest when disturbed by the visit of Avallo, who appeared to have entered by the window, which stood half open. A short but graceful Spanish mantle enveloped the left side of this young cavalier, who wore his broad hat pulled over his face; but his fierce dark eyes flashed and gleamed brightly beneath its shade, like those of a tiger in the dark; and when at times the rays of light fell on his swarthy cheek, it seemed inflamed with rage, while his teeth were clenched, and his lips pale and quivering. He kept his left hand free from the folds of his velvet mantle, but his fingers grasped tremblingly the hilt of a poniard, which appeared with a brace of pistols in his embroidered girdle. A gold crucifix glittered on his breast, and a long black feather, fastened in the band of his hat, floated gracefully over his left

shoulder. He appeared a striking and romantic figure as he stood confronting Alvarado, with his proud head drawn back and his right foot placed forward, while he surveyed the proprietor of the mansion with eyes keen and fiery, and with rage and unutterable scorn bristling on every hair of his smart moustaches.

"Look you, Alvarado," said he, after a very long pause; "I will not be trifled with! *Santos!* my dagger is likely to punch an unhappy hole in the old friendship we have so often vowed to each other over our cups at Salamanca, if we come not to some terms this very night. Beard o' the Pope, señor! I am not now the simple student I was then. Alvarado! you know me. This night, then—"

"There is but one hour of it to run," observed the other in a deprecating tone. "There is but one hour-—"

"Time enough, and to spare, then, thou base juggler!"

"What would you have, insolent?" said Alvarado fiercely, as he closed the casement with violence. "To-morrow I will meet you in the pass of Lanz, and there, with pistols, with sword, or with dagger, I will yield you that satisfaction for which you have such a craving."

The other laughed scornfully. "No, no, my blustering guerilla! such a meeting will not suit my purpose. Every drop of blood in the veins of your body would not wash away the insult you are

likely to cast upon the name of Avallo by means of this poor sister of mine. Hear me, Don Alvarado! and hear me for the last time! I tell you that my sister has been wronged,—basely wronged and betrayed by you! I want not your blood; but do my sister justice, or, by the bones of Rodrigo! I will make all Spain ring with the tidings of Avallo's vengeance!"

"How!" said the other sullenly; "do her justice?"

"Wed her,—ay, before this week is out!"

"A week is a short time, Señor Carlos; and you forget that Ximena is likely to live for many months yet," said the other with a grim smile. "Marry Elvira? Fool! the cursed trammels of one unhappy marriage are wound around me already."

"You are a Spaniard, señor,—my friend," replied Avallo scornfully, "and can easily find some means to break these trammels you speak of. Thanks to our sunny clime, the yoke of blessed matrimony sits lightly on our necks. This little chit of Asturia, your wife, shall not long be a bar in the way of righting my sister's honour."

"Ximena—"

"Let her die!" said the young desperado, with a thick voice of concentrated passion; "let her die this very night—this very hour! She is a desolate woman. Should her death be suspected, who shall avenge her? All her kindred perished when the French sacked Madrid. Shall she take her departure to a better place to-night, then?"

"Villain!" exclaimed Alvarado, flinging away from him; "speak again of that, and I will slay you where you stand!"

"Pooh!" replied the other with contempt. "I have three trusty mates within cry, whose daggers would slash to ribbons every human being your house contains; so talk gently of slaying, señor. By *Santiago!* if it needs must be, all Spain shall know that Don Carlos Avallo is a cavalier as jealous of his sister's honour and of his own name, as any hidalgo between Portugal and the Pyrenees. Do you still scruple? See the hand of the clock approaches to the twelfth hour."

"Hush, devil and tempter! I tell you you are the veriest villain in Spain!"

"Hah! I now remember. Most worthy Don Alvarado, I suppose I must acquaint my uncle the prime-minister with the name of the traitor who betrayed to the savage Mazzachelli, the Italian follower of Buonaparte, the long-defended town of Hostalrich, that he might obtain revenge by meanly destroying its governor, the brave Don Julian de Estrada. I have to say but two words of this matter to the minister at Madrid, and, Alvarado, thou art a lost man!"

Alvarado's large eyes gleamed with vindictive fury, while his olive cheek grew pale as death.

"A craven cavalier, truly!" continued the ferocious Avallo, regarding him with a countenance expressive

of stern curiosity, and cool, but triumphant derision. "*Hombre!* you know that I have heard of that misdeed of yours; and should I breathe but a word abroad about the unpleasant fact, your ample estates will be pressed into the royal purse, and your neck in the ring of the *garrote*, as surely as my name is Avallo. Choose, then," said he, in a deliberate tone; "choose, then, between utter destruction and the death of this pale-faced Ximena. The beauty of Elvira will make you ample amends. Her beauty—But you have already judged of that, Señor Triaquero," he added bitterly.

"Wine, or something else, has made you mad," said the other, with an attempt to be bold. "Think not that I will permit you to lord it over me thus. And as for that affair you spoke of—Hostalrich—something more will be requisite than the mere assertion of a subaltern of the Castel Blazo regiment, to destroy the hard-won honour and doubloons of such a cavalier as myself."

"Perfectly reasonable," said the other, scornfully. "Three different letters, written by you to Mazzachelli, and dated from Hostalrich, are abundant proof. I found them on the road-side near Vittoria, amidst a wilderness of papers; and now they are in the safe strong box of a certain lawyer, subtle as the devil himself."

Alvarado sunk into a chair, and covered his face with his hands, to hide the rage and mortification which distorted it.

"Hostalrich! Hah! 'twas a brave siege that!" said his tormentor, contemplating his dismay with a triumphant smile. "And then poor Don Julian to be so basely betrayed, after all his chivalric defence and deeds of arms! But to return. Ximena,—is not her chamber at the end of the gallery?"

"It is," faltered the other.

"'Tis well," replied Avallo, striking his hand on the casement. The dark figure of a stranger appeared in the balcony outside the window. After a few moments' conference, he withdrew.

"Let us only keep quiet," said he, turning a little pale, as he extinguished the lights in the lustre. "Retire to bed, Señor Alvarado, who is soon to become the husband of Elvira Avallo. Sleep sound, for Ximena will be found cold in the morning: and see that, in the critical hour of discovery, your wonted cunning fails you not. Show grief, and rage, and tears: you understand me? *Diavolo!* I hope your walls are built substantially. Should the guest who occupies the next room have overheard us, all is lost. But I have arranged for him. To make sure of his silence, Narvaez Cifuentes shall waylay him among the mountains at Roncesvalles, where even the sword of Roland would fail to aid him now-a-days."

While the cavalier, probably to keep up the courage of his companion, continued to speak away in loud and incautious tones, Stuart descended from his eminence, where, with considerable repugnance, he had acted the eaves-dropper so long; and drawing his

sword, advanced to the room-door. In his eagerness to unfasten it, the handle of the bolt broke, leaving it still in its place; and the door remained shut and immovable. A cold perspiration burst over Ronald's brow. The life of the poor lady seemed to hang but by a hair.

"What evil spirit crosses me now!" he muttered. "A moment like this may cause the repentance of a life-time. Ah, assassins! I shall mar you yet." Unsheathing his dirk, he applied it to the iron plate on which the bolt ran in a groove. He attempted to wrench it off: the thick blade of the long dagger bent like whalebone, and threatened every instant to snap, while the envious and obstinate bolt remained firm as a rock.

A cry—a shrill and wailing cry, which was succeeded by a gurgling groan, arose from the end of the corridor. The fate of Ximena was sealed! Grown desperate, Stuart rushed against the door, and applying his foot, sent frame, panels, and every thing flying along the passage in fifty fragments. A lustre of coloured lamps, which hung from the ceiling, revealed to him Donna Ximena in her night-dress, rushing from an opposite door. Her long black hair was unbound, and streamed down her uncovered back and bosom, the pure white of which was stained with blood, that had also drenched her linen vest and wrapper. These were her only attire. A villain, wearing a dark dress, and having his face concealed by a black velvet mask, was in pursuit;

and, catching her by her long flowing hair, at the very moment of her escape from the door, dashed her shrieking to the earth with his left hand, while the short stiletto which armed his right was twice buried in her neck and bosom. Almost at the same moment the long double-edged broad-sword of the Highlander was driven through his body, and, wallowing in blood, the stricken bravo sunk beside the warm and yet quivering corpse of his victim. His comrade escaped, and Ronald, disdaining again to strike, withdrew slowly his dripping blade, and placed his foot upon his neck.

"Hah! Señor Narvaez!" said he. "Devil incarnate! the murder of Donna Catalina and the wound at Merida are revenged now; and 'tis happily from my hand you have received the earthly punishment due to your crimes."

He tore the visor from the face of the bleeding man, and, to his equal disappointment and surprise, beheld, not the rascal visage of Cifuentes, but the fierce and forbidding countenance of one that might well have passed for his brother. Death and malice were glaring in his yellow eyes, and his features were horribly distorted by the agony he endured. By this time the whole household were alarmed, and servants, male and female, came rushing to the place with consternation and horror imprinted on their features. The aged *contador* of the mansion appeared in his trunk-breeches and nightcap, armed with a dagger and ferule; the fat old bearded butler came

to the scene of action clad only in his doublet and shirt, and grasping, for defence, a couple of pewter flasks by the neck: the other servants bore knives, stilettoes, pikes, spits, and whatever weapons chance had thrown in their way.

On beholding their lady dead on the floor, a man dying beside her, and Stuart standing over them with a crimson weapon in his hand, they uttered a shout, and prepared for a general assault. A bloody engagement might have commenced, when the villanous Don Alvarado appeared, with dismay and grief so strongly imprinted on his countenance, that Stuart was almost inclined to doubt the evidence of his own senses, and to believe the conversation with Carlos Avallo must have been a dream. He looked around for that worthy hidalgo; but, on the first alarm, he had vanished through the window of Alvarado's room. The last-named gentleman seemed inclined to impute the whole affair to Stuart, and a serious tumult would unquestionably have ensued, had not a party of the Alava regiment, who formed the guard on the Condé Villamur's house, arrived with fixed bayonets, and carried off all the inmates prisoners. Perceiving Ronald's uniform, the serjeant commanding the escort desired him to retain his sword, and seemed disposed to allow him to depart; but a syndic, with a band of alguazils, burst in with their staves and halberts, and insisted on the whole party being taken to the house of Micer Bartolmé, the alcalde, on the opposite side of the Plaza.

The magistrate was clamorously roused from bed, and forced to take his seat and hear the case. He was very sulky at being disturbed, and, seated in his easy chair, wrapped a blanket around him, and frowned with legal dignity on all in the crowded apartment. Ronald felt considerable anxiety for the issue of the affair, as all present seemed disposed to consider him guilty; and he certainly had no ambition to die a martyr to their opinions. The dead body of Ximena de Morla was deposited on the floor. Her cheek was yet of a pale olive colour; but all her skin that was bare,—her neck, bosom, arms, and ankles, were white as the new-fallen snow, and beautifully delicate. A mass of dark curls and braids fell from her head, and lay almost beneath the feet of the pale group around her.

A flickering lamp threw its changeful gleams upon the company, and by its light a clerk sat, pen in hand, to note the proceedings. Every person present being sworn across the blades of two poniards, the examination commenced, each witness stating what he knew in presence of the others. The bravo, having declared that he was dying, called eagerly for a priest, that he might be confessed. Accordingly, a *padre* belonging to a mountain-convent, who happened to be that night in the house, approached slowly, and in no very agreeable mood, for his brain was yet reeling with the fumes of his debauch overnight with the alcalde, who had stripped him of every maravedi at faro. The moaning ruffian lay

upon the floor, still and motionless; but the blood fell pattering from his undressed wound upon the damp tiles, while his thick beard and matted hair were clotted with the perspiration which agony had wrung from his frame.

A dead silence was maintained by all in the apartment while the padre knelt over the assassin, and, in the dark corner where he lay, heard his low-muttered confession of crimes, that would have made the hairs on his scalp—had there been any—bristle with horror. Dreadful was the anxiety of the dying wretch, whose coward soul was now recoiling at the prospect of death, and with desperation he clung to the hopes given him by his superstitious faith. Ever and anon he grasped the dark robe, the knotted cord, or the bare feet of the Franciscan, beseeching him to pity, to save, to forgive him; and the accents in which he spoke were terrible to hear. The clerk sat smoking a paper cigar and scraping away assiduously at a quill, while the alcalde nodded in his chair and fell fast asleep. The alguazils leant on their halberts, and coolly surveyed the company. A murder, which would have filled all Scotland with horror, in Elizondo scarcely created surprise. But the halberdiers were accustomed almost daily to brawls and deeds of blood, so that their apathy could scarcely be wondered at.

The half-clad servants crowded together in fear, and Ronald stood aloof, regarding with the utmost commiseration the form of the poor Spanish lady,

exposed thus in its half-clad state to the gaze of the rude and vulgar. He kept a watchful eye on Alvarado, that he might not, by sign or bribe, cause the padre to put any false colouring on the statements whispered to him by the dying man, when he would have to recapitulate them to the alcalde. The cavalier never dared to look in the direction where his murdered wife lay; but, turning his back upon it, maintained a sulky dignity, and continued to polish with his glove the hilt of his stiletto, seeming, in that futile occupation, to be wholly abstracted from worldly matters, while he muttered scarcely audible threats against the alcalde, the syndic, and their followers for their interference. The bravo, having handed over to the confessor all his loose change, received in return an assurance of the forgiveness of mother church for all his misdeeds, which seemed to console him mightily. The padre mumbled a little Latin, and assuring him he might die in peace, buttoned his pouch, containing the ill-gotten cash, with a very self-satisfied air. It almost reimbursed the last night's losses at faro. Nevertheless, the terrors of the guilty wretch returned; he moaned heavily, and grasping the skirt of the Franciscan's cassock, besought him earnestly not to leave him in so terrible a moment. He often pressed the friar's crucifix to his lips, and the groans of mental and bodily agony which escaped from them were such as Ronald Stuart had never heard before,—and he had stood on many a battle-field. The bravo be-

lieved himself dying, and, at his request, the Franciscan repeated aloud his confession, in which he declared himself guilty of the lady's murder, and exculpated every one, save his comrade Cifuentes, who gave the first stroke, and Don Carlos Avallo, who, for twenty dollars, had secured the service of their daggers,—but for what reason, he knew not. He ended by a bitter curse on Stuart, whom he ceased not to revile; and he vowed that, if he could rise from the grave, he would haunt him to the latest day of his existence. Ronald heard the ravings of the wretch with pity, and was very thankful that, in the extremity of his agony and hatred, he had not declared him guilty of the murder of both.

"*Santa Maria de Dios!*" muttered the servants, signing the cross, and shrinking back aghast at the ravings of the wounded man.

"Base scullion!" cried the sleepy magistrate, addressing the assassin, "I will make you pay dearly for disturbing me of my night's rest. Vile *ladron!* the screw of the *garrote* will compress your filthy weasand tighter than you will find agreeable. Take your pen, *señor escrivano*, and write to our dictation a warrant to apprehend, in the king's name, a certain noble cavalier, by name Don Carlos Avallo, for causing the death of this honourable lady. And further—"

He was interrupted by Alvarado, who desired imperiously that he would leave Avallo to be dealt with otherwise; and tossing his purse, which seemed

heavy, into the alcalde's lap, he requested him to close this disagreeable business at once.

"*Paix!* as we say at faro,—double or quits; a very noble cavalier!" muttered the partly-tipsy, and partly-sleepy alcalde, pocketing the cash without betraying the least emotion. "Ho, señor scribe! give thy warrant to the devil to light his cigar with. *Bueno!* 'tis a drawn game. Dismiss the señors,—the court is broken up."

Bestowing a menacing glance on Stuart, Alvarado withdrew; the alguazils departed, taking the bravo with them, to get his wounds dressed before they hanged him; and the corse of Ximena was borne off by her female servants, who were loudly bewailing the loss of so good a mistress.

Day had dawned upon this extraordinary court, and its pale light was struggling for mastery with the flame of the lamp, ere the magistrate so abruptly closed the strange investigation. After all that had happened, Ronald could not return to the mansion of Alvarado; but, sending for his horse, at the invitation of the alcalde, and with the permission of the alcalde's lady, he remained that day at their house, as he was too much wearied by the want of sleep to commence his journey at the time he had intended. To Micer Bartolmé he related the conversation he had overheard, and insisted on Don Alvarado's villany being punished, threatening, for that purpose, to wait upon the Condé Penne Villamur, and state to him all that he knew of the matter.

"By doing so, you would not gain any thing equal to what you stake,—your life," replied the magistrate quietly, puffing away at a long Cuba the while. "Hark you, *señor oficial;* I wish you no harm, but beware how you cross the path or purposes of Castellon de la Plana. He is a fierce hidalgo, and never spared man or woman in his hate or vengeance; and his gossip, Don Carlos Avallo, is a born devil, a very imp of *Satanas!* I know them both of old, and would fain keep the peace with them, or my place of alcalde would not be worth a rotten *castano.* Think not that I deal with you falsely in saying these things. Heaven knows how many daggers Alvarado's gold may have sharpened against you ere this. His look, as he departed, boded you no good. You are a stranger in the land, and if you will take sound advice, keep close within my house until to-morrow, when you can depart with the padre Giuseppe. He goes by the way of the Maya rock to his convent, and will show you the road to France."

Ronald felt the force of this advice, which was so cunningly imparted, that he never suspected a hidden meaning. But the alcalde, with a treachery not uncommon in Spain, was in communication with Alvarado, who bribed him to detain the stranger until a plan was completed for his ensnarement among the mountains.

Notwithstanding Bartolmé's advice, Stuart often wished, during that irksome day, to enjoy a ramble

about Elizondo, but was as often warned that ill-looking *picaros* were evidently watching the house. This information served only to set his blood on fire, and he fretted and fumed like a caged lion, and would have sallied out in spite of the solemn warnings and injunctions; but the magistrate, with a cunning air of affectionate and paternal solicitude, barred his way, and in so kind a manner, that it was impossible to be angry. All this was mere acting. Old Micer Bartolmé and the Franciscan brother were two arrant sharpers and knaves; but Ronald resisted firmly all their attempts to engage him in gambling, and the day was passed without a card or dice being produced, greatly to the chagrin of the friends, who, after having sold the stranger to Alvarado, were desirous to strip him of his last *peseta*.

Next morning, at the old marching time, an hour before day-break, he quitted Elizondo. He departed at that early hour for the double purpose of "stealing a march" on Alvarado's spies, if any were really planted upon him, and of proceeding expeditiously on his journey. His horse was well refreshed by the delay at Elizondo, and carried him along at a rapid trot. The padre Giuseppe, with whose presence and conversation he could very well have dispensed, jogged on by his side, mounted uneasily upon the hindmost part of a stout ass,—an animal not so much despised in Spain as among us, by whom the large black cross borne by every donkey on its

back, is neither remarked nor reverenced. As they passed from the Calle Mayor into the Plaza, Giuseppe pointed out, jocularly, the body of the dead bravo, still seated upright on the chair of the *garrote*, which was elevated on a scaffold about four feet above the street; and his reverence increased the disgust of his companion by passing several very unfriarly jokes upon the appearance of the corpse.

On quitting Elizondo, they took the direct road for Maya. Stuart made this circuit for the purpose of avoiding any snare laid for him among the mountains by Don Carlos or Alvarado, who well knew how to employ and communicate with those villains who infest every part of Spain. Evil was impending, and he might have escaped it by taking the Roncesvalles road, or had his deceitful companion, the Franciscan, warned him; but for the bribe of a few dollars, Micer Bartolmé had purchased his silence. A few miles from Elizondo they passed a ruinous chapel where some French prisoners had been confined, and, by a strange refinement of cruelty, starved to death by their guards,—the guerillas of old Salvodar de Zagala. The floor was yet strewed with the bones of these unfortunates, who fell victims to a savage spirit of retaliation, and almost within sight of the fertile plains of their native country. The Franciscan continued to mutter prayers and make the sign of the cross with affected devotion, while

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Stuart surveyed the ghastly place with surprise and indignation.

"*La Caza de Dios,*" said he, reading the legend on the lintel of the door. "Alas! how it has been desecrated!"

The priest made no reply, but moved onward, kicking with his spurless heels the sounding sides of his *borrica,* leaving Ronald to follow as he pleased.

After riding a few miles further, they stopped at a *quinta,* or country-house, an unusual thing in Spain; and had not the proprietor been a well-known *contrabandista,* it would soon have been sacked and burned by the banditti in the neighbourhood. The owner was absent, but the *patrona* spread before her guests a tolerable repast of *bacallao,* bread of *milho* or Indian corn flour, delightful fresh butter named *manteca,* and garlic, onions, lupines, wine and cider in abundance; for all of which she would receive nothing but the padre's blessing and a kiss of peace, which the reverend Giuseppe bestowed upon her plump olive cheek with a hearty good will, of which her husband might not have approved had he been consulted.

At Maya, Stuart dined with the monks of the Franciscan convent. He had an excellent repast, composed of all the good things which the district could afford. The clergy of every country are certainly ardent lovers of all the good things of this

life, however much they may preach and declaim against them. Poor though Spain may be generally, it is within the stout old walls of the gloomy and spacious *convento* that the richest wines, the most delicate fruits, the most tempting viands, and the most massive plate, are ever to be found. Quite the reverse of the humble, dejected, and mortifying begging friars, from whom they took their name, Ronald found the Franciscans of Maya all very jovial fellows, who could laugh until they almost choked, and could push the can about, and give vent at times to a most unclerical oath. Most of them had been serving in the guerilla bands, and at the peace had resumed the cassock and cope, the mass-book and rosary; but the blustering manners acquired under such leaders as Mina and Julian Sanchez, together with the coarse sentiments of the dissolute and irregular lives they had led, appeared continually through their hypocritical airs and the sombre disguise of the cloister. And such as these are the men who are welcomed to every hearth and home in Spain! who are the advisers of the young, the companions of the old, and the confessors and the spiritual consolers of all, and into whose ears many a female pours the inmost secrets of her heart, —secrets which, perhaps, she would have revealed to no other mortal living!

To pay for his entertainment, Stuart deposited a handful of *pesetas* at the shrine of the Virgin, whose portrait in the niche, padre Giuseppe informed him,

was that of the *querida* of the padre abbot. The fairest dame in Maya had sat for it, to please the superior, who now never prayed before any other image. Complimenting the abbot on his taste, Stuart mounted and bade the holy fathers adieu, tired alike of their manners and their cloister-scandal.

He was now riding straight on the road for France. After he passed the rock of Maya, every rood of ground became as familiar to him as the scenery of his native glen. The sun was setting as he entered the pass, and as its light waxed more dim and sombre, his thoughts grew sadder and more gloomy; for all the excitement of war had now passed away, and the kindlier feelings had begun to resume their sway in the heart. He felt an unaccountable melancholy stealing over him, but whether it was caused by a presentiment—a prophetic sense of hidden danger, or by recollections awakened by the surrounding scenery, I know not: probably by the latter.

Poor Alister Macdonald was with him the last time he trod that way so merrily to the strain of the pipe. He was now within a few feet of his tomb, and all the memory of their past friendship came gushing upon his remembrance. He stayed his horse, for a short space, to gaze upon the scene of that contest, so fierce and so bloody, where his brave brigade had fought with a spirit of gallantry and chivalric devotion equalling that of Leonidas

and his Spartans. Where the roar of so many thousand muskets had once rung like thunder among the hills all was now silent. The stillness was broken only by the scream of the wild bird, as, warned by the falling dew and deepening shadows, it winged its way to its eyrie among the rocks.

"Well may the flowerets bloom, and the grass be verdant here!" thought Stuart. "Every foot of ground has been drenched in the blood of the brave!"

The place presented the appearance of an old church-yard which had been shaken by an earthquake. In some places skeletons lay uncovered, and in others the grass grew long and rank above the mounds.

A green stone, with its head of moss, marked the resting-place of Alister, that looked like one of those solitary old graves which, on the Scottish moors, mark the resting-place of a covenanting warrior. The earth which Evan's hands had heaped over it was now covered with long weeds and nettles, waving sadly in the wind as it whistled down the pass. The remnants of uniform, broken weapons, ammunition-paper, and all the usual appurtenances of an old battle-field, lay strewn about. The great cairn raised by the Gordon Highlanders to mark where their officers were buried, cast a long spectral shadow across the ground, for now the broad disk of the sun was just dipping behind the

mountains. The scene was gloomy and terrible, and Stuart was scarcely able to repress a shudder as the recollections of the dead came crowding fast and thick upon him. But, bestowing a last look on romantic Spain, the land of bright eyes, of the mantilla, of the dagger and the guitar, he turned, and rode down the narrow mountain-path to the northward.

CHAPTER IV.

CIFUENTES.

"Let Death come on;
Guilt, guilt alone shrinks back appall'd. The brave
And honest still defy his dart; the wise
Calmly can eye his frown, and Misery
Invokes his friendly aid to end her woes."

The Orphan of China.

The night was approaching, and Ronald being anxious to reach Los Alduides, Cambo, or any other village on the route for Toulouse, rode as rapidly as the rough and steep nature of the mountain path would permit. As he descended towards the Lower Pyrenees the ground became more irregular, and the road at times wound below beetling crags and through narrow gorges, which were scarcely illuminated by the red light from the westward.

Twice or thrice Ronald beheld, or imagined that he beheld, a head, surmounted by a high-crowned and broad-leaved hat, observing his progress from the summit of the rocks skirting a narrow dell through which he rode. This kept him on the alert, and the threatening words of Don Carlos Avallo re-

curred to him. He halted, drew his saddle-girths tighter, and looked to his pistols, leaving unstrapped the bear-skin which covered the holsters. At the very moment when he was putting his foot in the stirrup to remount, a musket was discharged from the top of a neighbouring cliff, and the ball fell flattened from a rock within a yard of his head. The white smoke was floating upwards through the still air, but no person was visible.

"*Banditti,* by Heaven!" exclaimed the startled and enraged Highlander, as he sprang on the snorting steed. "Farewell, Spain! and may all mischief attend you, from the Pillars of Hercules to these infernal Pyrenees! I wish the Nive rolled between them and me! But if swift hoofs and a stout blade will serve me in peril, I shall be in broad Gascony to-night."

Onward went Egypt at a full gallop, which was soon brought to a stop on his turning an angle of the rocks. Across the narrow pathway a number of men were busily raising a barricade of turf, branches, and earth; but on Ronald's appearance they snatched up their carbines, and leaping up the rocks with the agility of monkeys, disappeared.

"There is an ambush here," muttered Stuart. "Oh! could we but meet on the mountain-side to-night, Señor Avallo, I would teach you a sharp lesson for the time to come. On now! on, for death or life!"

He had very little practice in the true scientific mode of clearing a five-barred gate, but he feared not to leap with any man who ever held a rein; and when riding a Highland shelty at home, had leapt from rock to rock, and from cliff to cliff, over roaring linns, yawning chasms, and gloomy corries, which would have caused the heart of a Lowlander even to thrill with fear. Grasping a steel pistol in each hand, he came furiously down the path, with his belted plaid and ostrich feathers streaming far behind him.

"On, Egypt, on! brave and noble horse!" said he, encouraging the fine old trooper with words of cheer, at the same time goring his flanks with the sharp iron rowels. The steed bounded onward to the desperate leap; and when within a few yards of the barrier, straining every sinew and fibre until they became like iron, he bounded into the air with such velocity, that the rider almost lost his breath, yet sat gallantly, with his head up and his reins low. At that very moment a deadly volley—a cross-fire from more than a dozen muskets—flashed from the dark rocks around. Several balls pierced the body of the horse, which uttered a snorting cry of pain, and Ronald felt it writhe beneath him in the air. Instead of alighting on its hoofs, down it came, thundering with its forehead on the earth, to the imminent peril of the rider, who adroitly disengaged himself from the stirrups and alighted on his feet, confused, breathless, and almost stunned with the shock, while

the noble steed rolled over on its back, and never moved again.

Ronald was now in deadly jeopardy. Headed by Narvaez Cifuentes, a well-armed gang of Spanish desperadoes, nearly forty in number, surrounded him. Although Narvaez took the most active part in their proceedings, he did not appear to be their leader; and Stuart, when he knew that his life was forfeited by his falling into such hands, resolved that they should gain it dearly. He had broken his claymore and lost a pistol in the leap; but with the other he shot dead one assailant, and drawing his long dirk, struck fearlessly amongst them, right and left. He buried the steel claw of his Highland pistol in the head of one fellow, whose only defence was a red cotton *montero*, or cap; and he drove his left-handed weapon so far into the shoulder of another, that it remained as fast as if driven into a log of wood. All this was the work of a moment; but he was, immediately after these exploits, beaten to the earth with the butts of their fire-arms; and a Portuguese dealt him a blow on the head with a *cajado*, (a long staff, armed with a knob,) which deprived him of all sensation.

When consciousness returned, he found himself lying on the same spot where he had fallen; but the moon was shining brightly, and the banditti were still grouped around him. He had been rifled of his epaulets, his gold cross, and every thing of value, save the miniature of Alice Lisle, which, being con-

cealed, had escaped their hands. The contents of the portmanteau lay strewed about, and a Spaniard, in whom he recognised the ferocious young Juan de la Roca, once Mina's follower, was busily occupied in relieving poor Egypt of the encumbrance of his hide, which he did in a most scientific and tanner-like manner. Ronald had presence of mind enough to lie still, fearing that they might destroy him at once if he stirred; but, from what passed among them, he soon discovered that they were well aware he was only stunned when stricken down. Gaspar Alosegui, the powerful Spaniard who had been vanquished in feats of dexterity at Aranjuez by Campbell and Dugald Mhor, was present among the banditti, and, by the deference which was paid to every thing he said, appeared to be their *capitan*.

He wore several feathers in his hat, a costly mantle hung on his left shoulder, and several rich daggers and pistols glittered in his sash. His followers were variously attired and armed, but all had their strong muscular feet nearly bare, while their tawny legs, destitute of hose, were exposed to the knee.

Ronald gazed on the detestable Cifuentes with a fiery eye. He remembered all that Catalina had suffered from his barbarity; he remembered, too, the vow he had sworn to Alvaro to revenge her, and his heart beat quick, while he longed to fall upon him and slay him on the instant, and in the midst of his companions in crime.

"I will not now permit him to be slain, since he

has fallen alive into our hands," said Alosegui, addressing Narvaez in a decided tone. "He is a gallant soldier, and truly he has fought well for Spain. We have done enough for the doubloons of Avallo; so stand back, Micer Narvaez! He who would smite at the stranger, must do so only through my body!"

"*Angeles y Demonios!*" exclaimed the desperado hoarsely; "I tell you I will have his blood,—ay, and drink it too, even as I would water! We have long been enemies; and 'tis not Gaspar Alosegui that shall rob me of the revenge so dear to every true Spaniard."

"A mad *borrico*, by our Lady de'l Pilar!" exclaimed Gaspar, interposing his bulky form. "Speak softly, Cifuentes; and remember that you have proved the weight of my hand, which has been thrice on your throat ere now, I believe."

The robber shrunk back, and, grasping his stiletto, gave one of those formidable scowls of rage and malice which so well became his villanous front, his beetling brows and matted hair.

"Vincentio, the cripple, lies shot in the ditch yonder," said Juan de la Roca. "He fell by the hand of the Briton: his crooked joints will no longer afford us a laugh in our den among the cliffs. We have lost our prime fool, señores, and I say blood for blood."

"*Viva!*" shouted the banditti; "blood for blood! 'Tis guerilla law: his life for Vincentio's."

"To the dogs with the cripple!" exclaimed Gaspar. "I tell you, comrades, that while I can strike a blow in his defence, he shall not die! By the beard of Satanas, the first man that whispers aught of this again, shall feel my knife between his ribs. Look you, *señores camarados;* we have all more to gain by his life than his death. Narvaez tells us that the cavalier is a very great friend of Alvaro of Villa Franca, whom the new government have raised to the rank of count, and to whom they have granted doubloons enough to pave the highway from Zagala to Merida. Don Alvaro will ransom his friend, and a fair sum will thus fall into our pockets. If not, the laws we have formed shall take their course, and the stranger must die."

But Cifuentes was still clamorous for his blood, and insisted on slaying him with his *own hand.* The rising storm increased when Ronald staggered up and stood among them. Many of the banditti began to prime and handle their fire-arms; and Stuart felt considerable anxiety for the end of the matter. He endeavoured to second the efforts of Alosegui by a long and bitter address, in which he upbraided them for their ingratitude in thus maltreating one who had served Spain so well, and had so often faced her enemies. He tore open his jacket and displayed his scars, but he appealed to them in vain. His voice was drowned in peals of savage laughter, with groans and yells which roused his rage to an almost ungovernable pitch. His cheek burned with indigna-

tion as if a flame was scorching it, and his blood came and went through his pulses like lightning. How he longed to behold the effect of a sweeping volley of grape among these brutal desperadoes, could such have been discharged upon them at that moment! He watched eagerly the war of words carried on between Narvaez, Gaspar, and their adherents, and he earnestly hoped that blows would soon follow; to the end that, by arming himself, he might slay some more, perhaps cut his way through them and escape, or perishing, sell his life dearly as ever a brave man did who died sword in hand. Eyes began to kindle, and poniards were drawn,—oaths and invectives were used unsparingly on both sides, and a sharp conflict would probably have decided the matter, had not Juan de la Roca proposed to end the contest quietly by two throws of dice,—producing, while he spoke, a box and dice from his pocket. This motion was at once acceded to. Indeed these wretches seemed to have no mind of their own, but to be swayed by the opinions of others, as the wind agitates the boughs of a tree.

Brows were smoothed, and weapons sheathed; the oath and threat gave place to the equally brutal jest, and the gang crowded about their tall leader and his amiable lieutenant.

The fate of Ronald Stuart was to be in the power of him who should throw the highest number; and all swore on their crucifixes, or on the cross-guard of their poniards, to abide by the decision so

obtained. Ronald, with sensations almost amounting to frenzy, beheld Gaspar and his opponent retire to a flat stone, and rattle the fatal dice-box which was to determine whether or not he should be a living man in ten minutes. What a moment was this! Rage and hate mingled with sorrow and bitterness, dread and regret,—the regret that a brave man feels who finds himself at the mercy of those whom he despises. Almost trembling with the feelings of malice and fury which agitated him, Cifuentes unsheathed his poniard, and after carefully examining the point and edge, laid it on the stone, to be ready for instant use if he won.

The moon was now shining in all her silver splendour down the narrow dell, and the stars, gleaming in the studded firmament, like diamonds and rubies, sparkled as they do in the skies of Spain alone when the atmosphere is pure and calm. Stuart beheld the blade of Narvaez glancing in the moonlight, and never had he looked with such dread on a weapon as he did upon that deadly stiletto; yet he had never shrunk from a line of charged bayonets,—which, as the reader knows, he had faced fearlessly more than once: but it is another affair to be slaughtered like a lamb or a child. The green swelling mountains and the dark defile were silent; no aid was near, and in every eye he read the glance of a foe. Narvaez rattled the box aloft, and cast down the dice on the stone, and his adherents bent over him earnestly.

"Four and five—nine!" cried the ruffian. "Nine *onzas* out of my first plunder will be laid on the shrine of our Lady of the Rock if I win. Throw, Gaspar—and may the devil so direct, that you throw less!" He took up his poniard with a very decided air, while Gaspar in turn quietly rattled the box.

"Five and five—*ten!*" said he with cool triumph, looking around him; "*one* has saved him."

"Stay! let us look at them," cried Cifuentes, in a voice almost amounting to a shriek. "Ten, indeed! *Par Diez!* he has escaped me just now. But a time may yet come—"

"Silence!" roared Gaspar. "Señor," said he, advancing towards Ronald, who now began to breathe more freely, "I have saved your life,—for this time at least. You are now to consider yourself as our prisoner. We seldom keep any unless they are likely to pay well; for the rest, we generally find a stab six inches below the shoulder the best method for getting rid of them. But remember, señor, that we are not people to be trifled with; therefore attempt not to escape unransomed, for death would be the penalty: you have heard our oaths. If you have any interest here in Spain, your captivity will not be of long duration; and if you choose to take a turn of service with us among the mountains, we may be inclined to treat you as if you had the honour to be our comrade. We shall part friends, I trust. Many an alcalde and padre we have had, whose ransom has made us merry for months.

I tell you the truth, señor: we are men of courage and honour, in spite of slander and unpleasant appearances. We are true cavaliers of fortune, and are wont to be somewhat delicate on points of honour; therefore you must neither use threat nor taunt while among us, as our daggers lie somewhat loosely in their scabbards. And I must add, *señor oficial*, that if the Condé de Villa Franca refuses to ransom you for the sum we name, the laws of our society,—laws we have formed and solemnly sworn to,—must take their course."

"Well, Señor Gaspar," said Stuart, who had listened coolly to all this preamble with folded arms, "and your law; what is it on that particular head?"

"Death!"

"And the ransom?"

"Why, señor, we must arrange that. A cavalier is well worth a prior, or four alcaldes; but, as you are a soldier, and soldiers are seldom overburdened by the weight of their purses, we will not be severe."

"But Don Alvaro is rich," said Juan de la Roca. "Remember, my friends, that he married a rich dame of Truxillo, whose estates, when joined to his own, will be ample enough for a princedom—ay, for a kingdom larger than ever was Algarve."

"And bethink ye of the rich ores," said Narvaez; "ores dug for him from the bowels of the mountains at Alcocer, at Guadalcanal, and Cazella in Estremadura, dug for him by the hands of wretched slaves condemned to his service for petty or pre-

tended crimes by the accursed *regidores*, the *escrivanos del numero*, the alcaldes, the syndics, the military commanders, and the devil knows who more!"

"Cazella?" observed Gaspar; "right! there is silver and gold dug there."

"Yes, and have been so ever since the days of the infidel Moors," said Juan. "And Alvaro has mines of silver and copper at Logrosen, and in the Sierra de Guadaloupe. *Diavolo!* señores, a heavy fine! The cavalier of Estremadura is rich, and will redeem his friend from death. He has but to dig when he wants gold."

"*Carajo!*" said a robber; "I well know that. I was condemned to dig in the mine of Logrosen for robbing a priest of his mule; and I slaved away in those horrible pits until my bones well nigh parted company, and my back was flayed by the thongs of the cursed overseer. But one day I dashed out his brains with a shovel, and fled to the guerillas of Salvador de Zagala. A heavy ransom from Alvaro!"

"Two hundred golden *onzas!*" cried Juan de la Roca; "and if Villa Franca refuses, give his friend the Briton to feast the wolf and the raven!"

"*Viva!* Juan has spoken like a prince!" cried the banditti, while they made hill and valley ring with their boisterous applause.

Two, with their muskets loaded, had particular orders to escort Stuart, and to shoot him dead if he attempted to escape; after which, the whole band got in motion and advanced up the mountains,

seeking the most steep and dangerous paths, which often wound along the edge of beetling and precipitous cliffs, where Stuart, although a Scotsman and a mountaineer, had considerable trouble in threading his way.

Their journey ended when they reached a little square tower, which in size and form was not unlike the old fortalice of a lesser Scottish baron. It was perched on the summit of a steep rock, amid a wild and savage solitude, which appeared more dreary, at the time that Ronald viewed it, by the light of the waning moon.

This mountain fortress had been for centuries a ruin; and the little village, which had once been clustered near it, (according to the usual fashion in Spain,) had ages ago disappeared. But the outlaws, whom the feeble and crippled power of the Spanish authorities could not suppress, had thoroughly repaired it, and made it their principal stronghold; and from it, as their head-quarters, their lines and posts of communication were maintained through all the Basque provinces. Tradition said that it was erected by a petty prince of Navarre, and that the origin of its name was the murder of a priest within its walls. It was called the *Torre de los Frayles* (or Friars' tower); and the Guipuzcoan muleteer was careful to time his journey so that this ill-omened spot should be a few leagues in his rear before night fell.

On entering, a temporary drawbridge, crossing a deep fosse or chasm in the rocks, and forming the sole communication with the cliff, on a projection of which the tower was perched, was withdrawn, and Stuart, for the first time, felt his heart sink, as he entered the walls of the dreary abode of crime, and heard the strong door shut and barricaded behind him.

CHAPTER V.

HOME.

"He came not. Still, at fall of night,
She burned her solitary light,
By love enkindled,—love attended;
And still her brother chid her care.
* * * *
Thus pass away the weary weeks,
And dim her eyes, and pale her cheeks."

The Salamandrine.

During the spring of 1814, while Ronald Stuart was serving with Lord Wellington's army in the South of France, the pecuniary affairs of his father came to a complete crisis. The net woven around him by legal chicanery, by his own unwariness in plunging headlong into law-suits, and by prodigality of his money otherwise, he was ruined. "A true Highlander cannot refuse his sword or his purse to a friend," and the laird of Lochisla had been involved to the amount of several thousands in an affair of "caution," every farthing of which he had to pay. At the same time bills and bonds became due, and on his making an application for cash to Messrs. Caption and Horning, W. S., Macquirk's successors, they acquainted him, in a very short letter, composed

in that peculiar style for which these gentlemen are so famous, "that Lochisla was already dipped—that is, mortgaged—to the utmost bearing, and that not a bodle more could be raised." The unfortunate laird found that every diabolical engine of "the profession" was in requisition against him, and that the estate which had descended to him through a long and martial line of Celtic ancestors, was passing away from him for ever. In the midst of his affliction he received tidings of the deeds of his brave son Ronald, who was mentioned with all honour by Sir Rowland Hill in the despatch which contained the account of the successful passage of the Nive, and of the storming of the château.

"Heaven bless my brave boy!" said the laird; "I shall see him no more. It would rejoice me to behold his fair face and buirdly figure once again, before my eyes are closed for ever: but it may not be; he will never behold my tomb! It will be far distant from the dark pines that shade the resting-place of my forefathers in the islet of the Loch."

And the old laird spoke truly. Ere long he saw the hall of his fathers in possession of the minions of the law: the broad lands of Lochisla became the prey of the stranger; and, with the trusty auld Donald Iverach and a faithful band of followers, the feeble remnant of his people, who yet, with true Highland devotion, insisted on following their chieftain to the far-off shores of Canada, he bade adieu for ever to his father-land.

Ere yet he had departed, however, there came one who had heard of his misfortunes and of his contemplated exile, to offer him his hand in peace and affection. It was the Lord of Inchavon.

"I will be a friend to your noble boy," he said. The Stuart answered only "Heaven bless you, Lisle! but the lad has his sword, and a fearless heart."

They parted; and the clan Stuart of Lochisla, with its venerable leader, was soon on its way across the western wave.

At the time these events were occurring at home, Ronald was in the neighbourhood of Orthes with his regiment, which, in the battle that took place there, came in for its usual share of the slaughter and honour.

The long-awaited and eagerly wished-for peace arrived at last. Regiments were disbanded, and ships paid off; and in every part of Europe soldiers and sailors were returning to their homes in thousands, to take up the plough and spade, which they had abandoned for the musket and cutlass. The Peninsular part of our army were all embarked at Toulouse, and the inmates of Inchavon watched anxiously the daily post and daily papers for some notice of the arrival of the transports containing Fassifern and his Highlanders, whose destination was the Cove of Cork.

One evening, a bright and sunny one in June, when Lord Lisle had pushed from him the sparkling decanters across the elaborately-polished table, and

sunk back in his well-cushioned easy chair to enjoy a comfortable nap, and when Alice had tossed aside successively all the newspapers, (she read only the marriages, fashionable news, and the Gazette,) and taken up the last novel, which in her restlessness she resigned for *Marmion,* her favourite work, she was suddenly aroused from its glowing numbers by the noise of wheels, and the tramp of carriage-horses treading shortly and rapidly in the birchen lane, between the walls and trees of which the sound rung deep and hollow. The book fell from her hand; she started and listened, while her bosom rose, and a blush gathered on her soft girlish cheek. The sound increased: now the travellers had quitted the lane, and their carriage was rattling up the avenue, where the noise of the horses' feet came ringing across the wide and open lawn.

Alice shook the dark curls from her animated face, which became flushed with expectation. She moved to the window and beheld a travelling-chariot, drawn by a pair of stout bays, with the great-coated driver on the saddle. The whole equipage appeared only at intervals between the trees and clumps of the lawn, as the driver made the horses traverse the long and intricate windings of the avenue, which had as many turnings as the Forth, before the house was reached.

"O papa! papa!" she exclaimed, clapping her white dimpled hands together, and leaping to his side to kiss him and shake sturdily the huge knobby arms of his old easy chair, and again skipping back

to the windows with all the wild buoyancy of her age, "dear papa, do waken! Here comes Louis!"

"Eh! what! eh! Louis, did you say?" cried the old lord, bolting up like a harlequin. "Is the girl mad, that she frisks about so?"

"O dear papa! 'tis my brother Louis!" and she began to weep with joy and excitement.

"It must be he," replied her father, looking from a window; "it must be Louis! I don't think we expect any visitors. But to come thus! I always thought he would ride up from Perth on horseback. On my honour 'tis a smart turn-out that! A double imperial on the roof, and—how! there is a female, a lady's maid behind, and the rogue of a footman with his arm around her waist, according to the usual wont and practice. A lady inside, too! See, she is bowing to us. Well; I would rather have seen Louis; but I wonder who these can be!" He rang a bell violently.

"'Tis our own Louis, indeed! O my dear brother!" exclaimed Alice, trembling with delight. "Hold me up, papa; I am almost fainting. Ah!" added she inwardly, "when Louis is so near, Ronald Stuart cannot be far off."

"Louis, indeed!" replied her father pettishly, for he thought she had disappointed him. "Tut, girl! do you not see the lady in the vehicle?"

"O papa! that is a great secret,—the affair of the lady; we meant to surprise you;" and without saying more, she bounded away from his side.

The chaise was brought up at a gallop to the steps of the portico, and the smart postilion wheeled it skilfully round, backing and spurring with an air of speed and importance, scattering the gravel in showers right and left, and causing the chaise to rock from side to side like a ship in a storm. This was for effect. A postilion always brings his cattle up at a sharp pace; but the chaise was well hung on its springs, and the moment the panting horses halted, it became motionless and steady. At that instant Alice, with her masses of curls streaming behind her, rushed down the splendid staircase, through the lofty saloon, and reached the portico just as the footman sprang from the dickey and threw down the iron steps with a bang as he opened the door. An officer, muffled in a large blue cloak lined with red, leaped out upon the gravel walk; Alice threw her arms around her brother, and hung sobbing on his breast.

"Alie, my merry little Alie, has become a tall and beautiful woman!" exclaimed Louis, holding her from him for a moment while he gazed upon her face, and then pressed her again to his breast. "Upon my honour you have grown quite a tall lady," he added, laughing. "Our father—"

"Is well, Louis, well; and waiting for you."

"Good! This is my—this is our Virginia," said Louis, handing out his Spanish wife. "This is the dear girl I have always mentioned in my letters for two years past, Alice; her friends have all perished in the Peninsular war, and I have brought her far

from her native land, to a foreign country. You must be a kind sister to her, Alie, as you have ever been to me."

"I will always love her, Louis; I will indeed," murmured the agitated girl, who, never having beheld a Spaniard before, expected something very different from the beautiful creature around whose neck she fondly twined an arm. "I am your sister: kiss me, Virginia dear!" said she, and two most young-lady-like salutes were exchanged. The fair face of Alice Lisle blushed with pleasure. The darker cheek of the Castilian glowed likewise, and her bright hazel eyes flashed and sparkled with all the fire and vivacity of her *nacion.*

"Louis," whispered Alice, blushing crimson as she spoke, and as they ascended the sixteen steps of variegated Portsoy marble which led to the house; "Louis, is not Ronald Stuart with you?"

"Alas! no, Alice," replied Lisle, changing colour.

"Poor dear Ronald!" said his sister sorrowfully, "could he not procure leave too? Papa must apply to the colonel—to your proud Fassifern, for it."

"Virginia will inform you of what has happened," said Louis, with so sad a tone that all the pleasant visions which were dancing in the mind of the joyous girl were instantly destroyed, and she grew deadly pale; "Virginia will tell you all about it, Alie. Ladies manage these matters of explanation better than gentlemen."

"Matters!" reiterated the affrighted Alice invo-

luntarily; "matters! Heaven guide me! I thought all the terrors of these four years were passed for ever. But what has misfortune in store for me now?"

Her father, whose feet and limbs were somewhat less nimble and flexible than hers, and had thus been longer in descending the stair and traversing the long lobbies, now approached, and embraced his son with open arms; while, *en masse*, the servants of the mansion crowded round, offering their good wishes and congratulatory welcome to *the Master*, as Louis was styled by them, being the son of a Scottish baron. He was now the Master of Lisle, or Lysle, as it is spelt in the Peerage. The stately figure of the fair Castilian, who, embarrassed and confused, clung to the arm of the scarcely less agitated Alice, puzzled the old lord a good deal. She yet wore her graceful mantilla and tightly fitting Spanish frock of black satin. The latter was open at the bosom, to show her embroidered vest and collar, but was laced zig-zag across with a silver cord. The thick clusters of her hair were gathered in a *redecilla*, or net-work bag, behind, all save the glossy brown curls escaping from beneath a smart English bonnet, which although it fully displayed her noble and beautiful features, contrasted or consorted strangely with the rest of her attire.

The old lord appeared astonished and displeased for a moment. He bowed, smiled, and then stared, and bowed and smiled again, while Virginia coloured crimson, and her large Spanish eyes began to sparkle

in a very alarming manner; but beginning to suspect who the fair stranger was, the frank old lord took both her hands in his, kissed her on each cheek, begged pardon, and then asked whom he had the honour of addressing.

"How!" exclaimed Louis in astonishment; "is it possible that you do not know?"

"Not I, upon my honour!" replied his father, equally amazed; "how should I?"

"Were my letters from Orthes and Toulouse relative to my marriage never received?"

"Marriage!" exclaimed his father, almost pausing as they crossed the saloon. "By Jove! Master Louis, you might have condescended to consult me in such a matter!"

"My dear father," replied Louis, laughing, for he saw that his parent was more astonished than displeased, "you cannot be aware of the circumstances under— But you know the proverb, all is fair in war; and my letters—"

"Were all received,—at least, Alice received them all."

"Ah! you cunning little fairy," said Louis turning towards his pale sister; "you have played us all this trick to surprise your good papa, when he heard of his new daughter."

"A wonderful girl! to be the repository of so important a secret so long," said her father, evidently in high glee. "But she always loved to produce a commotion, and to study effect. I will hear all your

stories by-and-by, and sentence you each according to your demerits; but we must not stand here, with all the household gaping at us. Lead your naughty sun-burnt brother up-stairs, Alice—he seems to have forgotten the way,—and I will escort your new sister."

He gave his arm to Virginia, and conducted her up the broad staircase which led to the upper part of the mansion, where the splendour and elegance of the furniture, the size of the windows, the hangings, the height of the ceilings, the rich cornices, the carving, the gilding, the paintings, statues, lustres, the loftiness, lightness, and beauty of everything architectural and decorative, struck the stranger forcibly when she remembered the sombre gloom and clumsiness, both of fabric and fashion, to which she had been accustomed in the dwellings of her native country. Indeed, the mansion of the richest Spanish grandee was not so snug by one-half as the coachman's apartment above the stables at Inchavon-house.

Alice was in an agony of expectation to hear what Louis had to say about Ronald Stuart; but she was doomed to be kept cruelly on the mental rack for some time, while all her brother's humble but old and respected friends among the household appeared in succession, to tender their regards and bid him welcome, expressing their pleasure to "see him safe home again among decent, discreet, and responsible folk," as the jolly old butler, who acted as spokesman, said. There was the bluff game-keeper, in his tartan jacket, broad bonnet, and leather spats, or

leggings, long Louis's rival shot, and master of the sports; there was the pinched and demure old housekeeper, with her rusty silk gown, keys, and scissors, and huge pouch, which was seldom untenanted by a small Bible and big brandy flask; the fat, flushed and greasy cook, whose ample circumference proclaimed her the priestess and picture of good living; the smart and rosy housemaids all ribands and smiles,—Jessie Cavers in particular; and there was Jock, and Tom, and Patie, laced and liveried chevaliers of the cockade and shoulder-knot, who were all introduced at the levee in their turn, while confusion, bustle, and uproar reigned supreme through the whole of the usually quiet and well-ordered mansion of Inchavon.

Every one was glad and joyful to behold again the handsome young Master of Lisle; but then his lady! she was termed '*an unco body*,' and about her there were two conflicting opinions. The men praised her beauty, "her glossy hair, and her hawk's een," the women her sweetness and affability; but almost all had observed the crucifix that hung at her neck, and whispered fearful surmises of her being a Papist.

"My dear sir," said Louis, after they had become tolerably composed in a sort of snug library, termed by the servants, 'my lord's chaumer,'—"can it be possible, or true, that Alice has never informed you of my marriage with Donna Virginia de Alba?"

"I concealed it to surprise dear papa," replied Alice, making a sickly attempt to smile.

"You always loved effect, Alie," said her father; "but really I could have dispensed with so sudden a surprise on this occasion. How fortunate I am in having such a beauty for a daughter!" He passed his hand gently over the thick brown curls of the Spaniard. "Look up at me, Virginia; a pretty name, too! On my honour, my girl, you have beautiful eyes! I ever thought Alie's were splendid, but she will find hers eclipsed. Your father—"

"Was the Duke of Alba de T——," interrupted Louis, who was now anxious to produce an effect of a different kind in his bride's favour. "He was a Buonapartist—"

"Ah! his name is familiar to me. He—"

"Was unfortunately slain when the fort, or château, where I was confined, was so bravely stormed by Ronald Stuart's light company."

"I heard of all that, when the news arrived in London. Our Virginia comes of a proud, but a—a—an unfortunate race." He could not find a more gentle word.

"Spain boasts not of a nobler name than that of Alba; but, save a sister in a convent in Galicia, my dear Virginia is its only representative. All the cavaliers of her house have fallen in battle; and lastly the duke, by the hands of Evan Iverach and Macrone, a serjeant, who attacked him with his pike. Poor Stuart, though in peril himself, did all he could to save him; but the hot blood of the Gaël was up, and the fierce Spaniard perished. But Virginia is

weeping: we are only recalling her sorrows, and must say no more of these matters just now. Ronald Stuart—"

"Ah! by-the-by, what of him? A brave fellow! See how Alice blushes. Faith! I shall never forget the day the dauntless young Highlandman pulled me out of Corrie-avon. Has the good lad returned with you to Perthshire?"

"No," answered Louis with hesitation, glancing uneasily at Alice while he spoke. "He has not returned yet."

"'Tis well," continued his father. "Poor Stuart! he will have no home—no kind friends to return to, as you have, Louis, after all his toil and bloodshed. Not a hand is there now in the green glen of the Isla to grasp his in welcome!"

"I read in the Perthshire papers that the estate had been sold, and that his father, with all the Stuarts of the glen, had emigrated to Canada. Dreadful intelligence it will be for him when he hears it! He will be wounded most deeply in those points where the true Highlander is assuredly most vulnerable. He will be almost driven mad; and I would scarcely trust other lips than yours, Alice, to reveal the sad tidings to him. I read them at Toulouse. Stuart was not with us then. He has been—he has been—six weeks missing from the regiment."

"Six weeks missing!" cried Lord Lisle, while a cry of horror died away on the pallid lips of Alice, who drooped her head on the shoulder of Virginia.

"Keep a brave heart, Alie dear!" said Louis, clasping her waist affectionately. "I have no fears for your knight of Santiago, as the mess call him. He will swim where another man would sink. Had you seen him, as I often have, skirmishing in advance, charging at the head of his company, or leading the forlorn hope at Almarez on the Tagus, or the château on the Nive, you would suppose he had a charmed life, and was invulnerable to steel and lead, as men supposed Dundee to be until the field of Killiecrankie. Perhaps he has joined by this time. I procured six months' leave, and left the Highlanders the instant the anchor was dropped at Cove. My next letters from the regiment may have some intelligence. Campbell, I know, will write to me instantly, if he hears aught."

"But how comes it to pass, that Stuart is missing? what happened?" asked his father, while Alice listened in breathless agony to the reply.

"We were quartered at Muret, a town on the Garonne, eight or nine miles distant from Toulouse. We had lain there ever since the decisive battle gained over Soult; and in the church-yard of Muret Stuart buried his servant, a brave lad from Lochisla, who had received a death-shot on that memorable Easter Sunday. Ronald mourned his loss deeply; for the lad had become a soldier for his sake, and they were old schoolfellows—old companions and playmates. He was a gallant and devoted fellow. You remember him, Alice? Many a love-letter he

has carried to and fro, between this and Lochisla; and often, bonnet in hand, he has led your pony among the steepest cliffs of Craigonan, by ways and crooks where I should tremble to venture now."

"And he is dead?" said Alice, giving vent to her feelings by a plentiful shower of tears.

"He was shot by a Frenchman's bullet, Alie."

"Poor dear Evan!" replied his sister, wringing her white hands; "I shall never forget him. He was ever so respectful and so obliging."

"Jessie Cavers has lost her handsome sweetheart. He was buried close by the old church of Muret, and Ronald's hand laid his head in the grave. He received a deeper—a better—yet not less hallowed tomb than the many thousands who were covered up in ditches, in the fields, and by the way-sides, just wherever they were found lying dead. At Muret, one night, a despatch arrived from Lord Wellington by an orderly dragoon. It was to be forwarded to the Condé de Penne Villamur, at Elizondo, a town on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees; and, as its bearer, Stuart departed about midnight, on horse-back. Sufficient time for his return elapsed before our embarkation at Toulouse. The eventful day came; but no Stuart appeared, and we embarked without him. Some unlooked-for circumstance must have caused delay,—perhaps his horse becoming lame, or his cash running short: but we shall probably hear of him from Toulouse, or Passages, in a fortnight at the furthest. I have no fears for

Ronald Stuart. He will cut his way, scatheless, through perils which a score of men would sink under."

"I trust in Heaven that it may be so," said Lord Lisle fervently. "Truly, I wish the lad well; he is the last stem of an old tree, that has fallen to the earth at last."

Although Louis spoke cheerfully to comfort his agitated sister, he nevertheless felt considerable anxiety regarding the fate of his friend. He knew too well the disorderly state of the country through the wild frontiers of which he had to pass; and his imagination pictured a hundred perils, against which Ronald's courage and tact would be unavailing. He besought Virginia to comfort Alice, by putting the best possible face upon matters; but her unwary relative made circumstances worse, by letting truths slip out which had been better concealed, and which, although they seemed quite common-place matters to a Castilian, presented a frightful picture of Spain to a young Scottish lady.

The unhappy Alice became a prey to a thousand anxious fears and apprehensions, which prepared her mind to expect the worst. A month passed away—a weary month of misery, of sad and thrilling expectation, and no tidings were heard of Stuart. By Louis's letters from the regiment, it seemed that his brother-officers had given him up for lost. The newspapers were searched with sickening anxiety, but nothing transpired; and the family at Inchavon

beheld, with deep uneasiness, the cheek of Alice growing pale day after day, and her bright eyes losing their wonted lustre. About six weeks after Louis's arrival, Lord Lisle communicated with the military authorities in London regarding the young soldier, in whose fate his family were so greatly interested. All were in a state of great expectation when the long, formidable letter, covered with franks, initials, and stamps, arrived. To support herself Alice clung to Virginia, and hid her face in her bosom, for she trembled excessively while her father read the cold and official reply to his anxious letter.

"*Horse Guards,*

"My Lord, * * * 1814.

In reply to your Lordship's letter of the 25th instant, I have the honour to acquaint you, by the direction of His Royal Highness the Commander-in-chief, that nothing has transpired, further than what the public journals contain, respecting the fate of Captain Ronald Stuart, of the Gordon Highlanders. But, if that unfortunate officer does not rejoin his regiment at Cork before the next muster-day, he must be superseded.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord, &c. &c.

HENRY TORRENS,

Mil. Sec."

"Right Hon. Lord Lisle,
of Inchavon."

Alice wrung her hands, and wept in all the abandonment of woe. The last reed she had leant on had snapped—her last hope was gone, and she knew that she should never behold Ronald more. The next muster-day (then the 24th of every month) arrived; and, as being still "absent without leave," he was superseded, and his name appeared no longer on the list of the regiment. It was sad intelligence for his friends in Perthshire; but it was upon one gentle-loving and timid heart, that this sudden stroke fell most heavily. Poor Alice! she grew very sad, and long refused to be comforted. As a drowning man clings to straws, so clung Alice to every hope and chance of Ronald's return, until the letter of Sir Henry Torrens drove her from her last stronghold.

Days rolled on and became weeks, and weeks rolled on to months, and in her own heart the poor girl was compelled to acknowledge or believe, what her friends had long concluded, that Ronald Stuart was numbered with the dead. It was a sad blow to one whose joyous heart had been but a short time before full almost to overflowing with giddy and romantic visions of love and happiness. Under this severe mental shock she neither sickened nor died, and yet she felt as deeply and poignantly as mortal woman could suffer.

Few or none, perhaps, die of love or of sorrow, whatever poets and interested romancers may say to the contrary. But as this is not the work of the

one or the other, but a true memoir or narrative, the facts must be told, however contrary to rule, or to the expectation of my dear readers.

In course of time the sorrow of Alice Lisle became more subdued, the bloom returned to her faded cheek, and she used to laugh and smile,—but *not* as of old. She was never now heard to sing, and the sound of her harp or piano no more awoke the echoes of the house. She was content, but far from being happy. When riding or rambling about with Virginia or Louis, she could never look down from the mountains on the lonely tower and desert glen of Isla without symptoms of the deepest emotion, and she avoided every path that led towards the patrimony of the Stuarts.

But a good example of philosophy and resignation under woe was set before her by her servant, Jessie Cavers. That young damsel, finding that she had lost Evan Iverach beyond the hope of recovery, instead of spoiling her bright eyes in weeping for his death, employed them successfully in looking for a successor to his vacant place. She accordingly accepted the offers of Jock Nevermiss, the gamekeeper, whose coarse shooting-jacket and leather spats had been for a time completely eclipsed by the idea of Iverach's scarlet coat and gartered hose.

The old Earl of Hyndford came down again in the shooting season, and renewed his attentions to Alice; but with no better success than before,—much to his amazement. He deemed that her heart, being soft-

ened by grief, would the more readily receive a new impression. He quitted Inchavon-house, and, in a fit of spleen and disappointment, set off on a continental ramble, acting the disconsolate lover with all his might.

Louis, leaving Virginia at Inchavon with his sister, rejoined the Highlanders at Fermoy, and in a week thereafter had the pleasure to obtain a "company."

The Highlanders were daily expecting the route for their native country, but were again doomed to be disappointed. They were ordered to Flanders,—to the "Lowlands of Holland," where Scottish valour has been so often triumphant in the times of old, for the flames of war had broken forth again with renewed fury.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TORRE DE LOS FRAYLES.

"Thought's fantastic brood
Alone is waking; present, past, and future,
Wild mis-shaped hope and horrible rememb'rings,
Now rise a hideous and half-viewless chaos
To fancy's vision, till the stout heart fails
At its own prospect."

The Hermit of Roselva.

When Ronald found himself helplessly and, as he thought, irrecoverably immured in the *Torre de los Frayles*, and surrounded by a band of the most merciless and desperate ruffians conceivable,—defenceless, in their power, and secluded among the wildest fastnesses of the Spanish Pyrenees, his heart sickened at the hopelessness of his prospects. His life depended entirely on the will and pleasure of his captors, and he felt all that acute agony of spirit of which a brave man is susceptible when reflecting that he might perish like a child in their hands, helpless and unrevenged. He was conducted to a desolate apartment, to which light was admitted by a couple of loop-holes, which, being destitute of

glass, gave free admittance to the cold air of the mountains.

Excepting an antique table and chair, the room was destitute of furniture, and Ronald was compelled to repose on the stone-flagged floor, with no other couch than a large ragged mantle, which a renegade priest, one of thousands whom the war had unfrocked, lent him, offering, at the same time, indulgently to hear his confession. Ronald glanced at the long dagger and brass-barrelled pistols which garnished the belt of the *ci-devant* padre, and, smiling sourly, begged to be excused, saying that he had nothing to confess, saving his disgust for his captors, and the sense he felt of Spanish ingratitude.

"*Morte de Dios!*" swore the incensed priest as he departed, "you are an incorrigible heretic. Feeding you, is feeding what ought to be burned; and I would roast you like a kid, but for that meddling ape Gaspar!"

By order of the last-named worthy, who appeared to be the acknowledged leader, a sentinel was placed at the door of the apartment, which was well secured on the outside to prevent Ronald's escape. At the same time Alosegui, who said he wished to be friendly to a *brother capitan*, gave him a screw of a peculiar construction, with which he could strongly secure his door on the inside—a necessary precaution when so formidable an enemy as Narvaez Cifuentes was within a few feet of him. Having secured the entrance as directed, he rolled himself up in the

cloak of the pious father,—but not to sleep, for dawn of day found him yet awake, cursing his untoward fortune, and revolving, forming, and rejecting a thousand desperate plans to escape. Even when, at last, he did drop into an uneasy sleep or dreamy doze, he was quickly aroused by the twangling of guitars and uproar of a drunken chorus in the next apartment, where the padre was trolling forth a ditty, which, a few years before, would have procured him a lodging for life in the dungeons of the terrible Inquisition.

To Stuart, his present situation appeared now almost insupportable. He sprang to the narrow loop-holes, and made a long and acute reconnoisance of the country round about, especially in the neighbourhood of the robbers' den, and he became aware that escape, without the concurrence of Alosegui or some of his followers, was utterly impracticable. The tower was perched, like an eagle's nest, on the very verge of a perpendicular cliff, some hundred yards in height, and a chasm, dark and apparently bottomless, separated the tower from the other parts of the mountain, or, I may say, the *land*, as it hung almost in the air. At every pass of the hills leading to the narrow vale where it was situated, a well-armed and keen-eyed scout kept watchful guard, for the double purpose of giving alarm in case of danger, or warning when any booty appeared in sight. The bottom of the valley which the tower overlooked was covered with rich copse-wood, among

which wound, like a narrow stripe of crystal, a mountain stream, a tributary of the Bidassoa,—the way to the West.

About noon he was visited by Gaspar Alosegui, with whom he was ceremoniously invited to take breakfast; and yielding to the cravings of appetite, he unhesitatingly accepted the proposal, and sat down at the same table with four fellows, who, Gaspar told him, were the greatest cut-throats and most expert bravoes in Spain. The apartment in which they sat was a dilapidated hall, which bore no distant resemblance to the one at Lochisla, save that its roof was covered with carved stone pendants and grim Gothic faces, among which hung branches of grapes or raisins, nets of Portugal onions, bags of Indian corn, and other provender; and the floor was strewed with mule-pannels, saddles, arms of all sorts, towards which Ronald glanced furtively from time to time, and countless bales, barrels, wine-skins, &c. like a merchant's storehouse.

Ronald got through his repast without offending any of the dagger-grasping rogues; but he was so much disgusted with their language and brutality of manner, that in future he resolved to eat by himself, at all risks. Narvaez, with a strong party under his command, was absent, to watch for a train of mules in the neighbourhood of Roncesvalles, and Ronald was therefore relieved from his hateful presence. Gaspar assembled the remainder of the band in solemn conclave, to consult about the ransom of

Stuart. When the latter, who stood near Alosegui's chair, looked around him upon the ruffian assemblage, and beheld so many dark, ferocious, and black-bearded faces, he *felt* that, among such men, his life was not worth a *quarto*.

The amount of the ransom had been fixed on the preceding evening. When Alosegui inquired where the Condé de Villa Franca then resided, no one could say any thing with certainty about it, but all supposed him to be at Madrid. In support of this supposition, the *soi-disant* padre produced, from the crown of his sugar-loaf hat, a ragged number of "*El Español*," at least three months old, well worn and frayed, and which he carried about him for gun-wadding. In one of the columns, the arrival of Don Alvaro and his countess appeared among the fashionable intelligence. To Madrid, therefore, it was resolved that Ronald should despatch a letter, the bearer of which should be Juan de la Roca, who, for cunning and knavery, was equal, if not infinitely superior, to Lazarillo de Tormes, of happy memory. His travelling expenses were also to be defrayed, fully and amply, before the captive would be released. To save time, for it was a long way to Madrid, Ronald proposed to communicate with the British consuls at Passages or Bayonne; but the proposition was at once negatived by a storm of curses and a yell of dissatisfaction from the banditti, while, waving his hand, Alosegui acquainted him sternly, that it was inconsistent with their safety or

intentions to permit his corresponding with the consul at either of these places, as some strenuous and unpleasant means might be taken to release him unransomed. And before they would proceed farther in the business, the wily *bandidos* compelled him to pledge his solemn word of honour as a cavalier and soldier, that he would not attempt to escape,—a pledge which, it may be imagined, he gave with the utmost reluctance. While his bosom was swelling with rage and regret, Ronald seated himself at the table and wrote to Alvaro, praying that he would lend him the sum the thieves required, and setting forth that his life was forfeited in case of a refusal. Seldom has a letter been indited under such circumstances. While he wrote, a Babel of tongues resounded in his ear,—all swearing and quarrelling about the delay, and proposing that cold steel or a swing over the rocks should cut the matter short, as it was very doubtful whether the Count de Villa Franca would ever send so large a sum of money. But Gaspar's voice of thunder silenced their murmurs.

"I will drink the heart's blood of any man who opposes or disobeys my orders," cried he, striking the rude table with his mighty fist. "I am a man of honour, and must keep my word, *par Diez!* Hark you, my comrades; again I tell you, that for three months the life of the prisoner is as sacred as if he were an abbot."

"Three months!" thought Ronald bitterly. "In

three months, but for this cursed misfortune, I might have been the husband of Alice Lisle."

The letter to Don Alvaro was sealed by Ronald's own seal, (which one of the band was so obliging as to lend him for the occasion,) and placed in the hand of Juan de la Roca.

"*Adios, señor! adios, vaga!*" said the young thief with an impudent leer, and presenting his hand to Ronald at his departure. "Remember, señor, that for your sake, I lose the chance of winning one of the sweetest prizes in Spain."

"How, Señor Juan?" replied Stuart, bestowing on him a keen glance of contempt.

"A girl, to be sure, a fair girl we captured near Maya," said Juan sulkily; "and I am half tempted to cast your despatch to the winds."

"Come, Juan, we must part friends at least," said Ronald, willing to dissemble when he remembered how much his fate lay in the power of this young rascal. He gave him his hand, and they parted with a show of urbanity, which was probably affected on both sides.

In a few minutes he beheld him quit the Friars' Tower, and depart on his journey mounted on a stout mule, and so much disguised that he scarcely knew him. His ragged apparel had been replaced by the smart attire of a student, and was all of becoming black velvet. A large portfolio was slung on his back, to disguise him more, and support the character which he resolved to bear as a travelling

artista. He was a very handsome young fellow, and his features were set off by his broad sombrero and the black feathers which vanity had prompted him to don. A black silk mantle dangled for ornament from his shoulders, while one more coarse and ample was strapped to the bow of his mule's pannel. He had a pair of holsters before him, and wore a long poniard in his sash: altogether, he had very much the air of a smart student of Salamanca or Alcala. From a window Ronald anxiously watched the lessening form of this messenger of his fate, as he urged his mule down the steep windings of the pathway to the valley; and a thousand anxieties, and alternate hopes and doubts distracted him, as he thought of the dangers that beset the path of his ambassador, of the lengthened duration and possible result of his expedition.

In no country save Spain could the dreadful atrocities perpetrated by the wretches into whose hands Ronald had fallen, have been permitted in the nineteenth century. A day never passed without the occurrence of some new outrage, and many were acted under his own observation. On one occasion the band captured an aged syndic of Maya, who had made himself particularly obnoxious by executing some of the gang. His captors, to refine on cruelty, tore out his eyes and turned him away on the mountains in a tempestuous night, desiring him to return to his magistracy, and be more merciful to cavaliers of fortune in future.

An unfortunate *medico* of Huarte, who was journeying on a mule across the mountains from St. Juan de Luz, where he had been purchasing a store of medicines, fell into their clutches somewhere near the rock of Maya. He could procure no ransom: many who owed him long bills, and whom he rescued from the jaws of death by the exercise of his art, and to whom his messenger applied, would send him no answer, being very well pleased, probably, to be rid of a troublesome creditor. One of the band being seriously ill, the life of the *medico* was to be spared if he cured him. The bandit unluckily died, and the doom of his physician was sealed. It was abruptly announced to him that he must die, and by his own weapons, as Gaspar informed him. The unhappy son of Esculapius prayed hard that his life might be spared, and promised that he would dwell for the remainder of his days in the Torre de los Frayles,—to spare him, for he was a very old man, and had many things to repent of. But his tyrants were inexorable. After being confessed with mock religious solemnity by Gorgorza de la Puente, he was compelled to swallow every one of his own drugs, which he did with hideous grimaces and trembling limbs, amidst the uproarious laughter and cruel jests of his destroyers, who beheld him expire almost immediately after finishing the nauseous dose they had compounded, and then consigned his body to that charnel-house, the chasm before the doorway of their pandemonium.

Several months elapsed—months which to Ronald appeared like so many centuries, for he had awaited in almost hourly expectation the arrival of some intelligence from Madrid; but the dreary days lagged on, and his heart began to lose hope. Juan de la Roca appeared to have travelled slowly. Letters were received from him by Alosegui, at different times, by the hands of certain muleteers and *contrabandistas*, who, on passing the mountains, always paid a regular sum as toll to the banditti, whom, for their own sakes, they were glad to conciliate so easily. These despatches informed the thieves of Juan's progress; but they often cursed the young rascal, and threatened vengeance for his tardiness and delay. But Juan, by exercising his ingenuity as a cut-purse, pick-pocket, cloak-snatcher, and gambler, contrived to keep himself in a constant supply of cash; and he seemed determined to enjoy to the utmost the short term of liberty allowed him. At last he disappeared. His companions in crime heard of him no more; but whether he had been poniarded in some brawl, sent to the galleys, or made off with Stuart's ransom-money, remained a mystery. The last appeared to the banditti to be the most probable cause for his non-appearance, and their curses were loud and deep.

Stuart now found that his life was in greater jeopardy than before. Alosegui proposed to him to take the vows, and join the banditti as a volunteer

in their next marauding expedition; and added, that if he would take pains to conciliate the good-will of the lieutenant, the Señor Narvaez, and distinguish himself, he might be promoted in the band. Alosegui made this proposal with his usual dry sarcastic manner; and although Ronald, who was in no humour to be trifled with, rejected the strange offer of service with as much scorn and contempt as he could muster, he saw, on second thoughts, that for his own safety a little duplicity was absolutely necessary. He affected to have doubts, and craved time to think of the matter, intending, if once well-armed, free of the tower, and with his feet on the free mountain-side, to fight his way off, or to die sword in hand.

But he was saved from the dishonour of even pretending to be their comrade for a single hour, because, in a very short space of time, a most unlooked-for change of politics took place at Torre de los Frayles.

A train of muleteers about to depart from Elizondo for France or the lower part of the Pyrenees, sent forward one of their number to the robbers' den to pay the toll. The mule-driver was made right welcome. The banditti found it necessary to cultivate to the utmost the friendship of these travelling merchants, with whom they trafficked and bartered, exchanging goods and valuables for money, clothing, arms, and ammunition, supplies of which were regularly brought them, and accounts were balanced in the most exact and business-like manner.

The envoy from Elizondo had transacted his business, and been furnished with Alosegui's receipt and pass, formally signed and marked with a cross; but he seemed in no hurry to depart, and remaining, drank and played at chess and dominoes for some hours with the thieves, who were, scouts excepted, generally all within their garrison in the day-time.

Ronald knew that a messenger from a train of mules was in his place of confinement; but as visits of this kind in no way concerned him, he had ascended to the summit of the tower, and there paced to and fro, watching anxiously as usual the long dim vista of the valley, with the expectation of seeing Juan de la Roca, on his grey mule, wending his way towards the Tower of the Friars. He would have hailed with joy the return of this young rogue as a delivering angel; but such a length of time had now elapsed since his disappearance that, in Ronald's breast, hope began gradually to give way to despair; and when he remembered Alice, his home, and his forfeited commission, his brain almost reeled with madness. Shading his eyes from the hot glare of the noon-day sun, he was looking intently down the long misty vale which stretched away to the westward, when he was roused by some one touching him on the shoulder.

He turned about, and beheld the round and good-humoured face of Lazaro Gomez, fringed, as of old, with its matted whiskers and thick scrub beard.

"Lazaro Gomez, my trusty muleteer of Merida! how sorry I am to see you in this devil's den."

"Señor, indeed you have much reason to be very happy, if you knew all."

"How, Gomez?"

"Hush, señor! Speak softly: you will know all in good time. I came hither to pay the toll for my comrades, who at present keep themselves close in Elizondo for fear of our friends in this damnable tower; and there they must remain until I return. By our Lady of Majorga, but I am glad to see you, señor! As I say now to my brother Pedro, *Señor Caballero*, allow me to have the honour of shaking hands with you?"

Stuart grasped the huge horny hand of the honest muleteer and shook it heartily, feeling a sensation so closely akin to rapture and delight, that he could almost have shed tears. It was long since he had shaken the hand of an honest man, or looked on other visages than those of dogged, sullen, and scowling ruffians. At that moment Stuart felt happy; it was so agreeable to have kind intercourse, even with so humble a friend, after the five months he had passed in the dreary abode of brutality and crime.

"And why, Lazaro, do you address your brother, the sergeant, so formally?"

"Ah, señor! Pedro is a great man now! He is no longer a humble trooper, to pipe-clay his belts and hold his captain's bridle. By his sword he has

carved out a fair name for himself, and a fair fortune likewise. He led three assaults against Pampeluna, like a very valiant fool as he is, and was three times shot through the body for his trouble. Don Carlos de España, a right noble cavalier, embraced him before the whole line of the Spanish army, and appointed him a cornet in Don Alvaro's troop of lancers. The next skirmish with the enemy made him a lieutenant, knight of Santiago, and of the most valiant order of "the Band." Don Alvaro has also procured him a patent of nobility, which he always carries in his sash, lest any one should unpleasantly remind his nobleness that he is the eldest son of old Sancho Gomez the alguazil, who dwelt by the bridge of Merida."

"I rejoice at his good fortune."

"But I have not told you all, señor," continued the gossiping muleteer. "A rich young widow of Aranjuez, the Condessa de Estramera, fell in love with him, when one day he commanded a guard at the palace of Madrid. An old duenna was employed —letters were carried to and fro—meetings held in solitary places; and the upshot was, that the condessa bestowed her fair hand, with a fortune of—of—the holy Virgin knows how many thousand ducats, upon my most happy rogue of a brother, Lieutenant Don Pedro Gomez, of the lancers of Merida; and now they live like a prince and princess."

"Happy Pedro! The condessa is beautiful; I have seen her, Lazaro."

"Plump Ignesa, the chamber-maid at the *posada* of Majorga, is more to my mind. I never could relish your stately donnas, with their high combs and long trains. This condessa is niece of that prince of rogues, the Duke of Alba de T——, who was killed in the service of Buonaparte: but Pedro cares not for that."

"In the history of his good fortune you see the advantage of being a soldier, Lazaro."

"With all due respect to your honourable uniform, which I am sorry to see so tattered, señor, I can perceive no advantage in being a soldier—none at all, *par Diez!* I envy Pedro not the value of a maravedi. He has served and toiled, starved and bled, in the war of independence, like any slave, rather than a soldier."

"So have I, Lazaro," said Stuart; "and these rags, and confinement here for five months, have been my reward."

The muleteer snapped his fingers, then gave a very knowing wink, and was about to whisper something; but, observing one of the banditti watching, he continued talking about his brother.

"Ay, like any poor slave, señor; and has more shot-holes in his skin than I have bell buttons on my jacket. And now, when the war is over, he has still a troublesome game to play in striving to please his hot-headed commanding-officer and lady wife, whom it would be considered a mortal sin to baste with a buff strap, as I may do Ignesa when

she becomes my helpmate and better half. Pedro's honours weigh heavily upon him, and he has many folks to please; whereas I have none to humour save myself, and perhaps that stubborn jade *Capitana*, my leading mule, or Ignesa of Majorga, who gets restive, too, sometimes, and refuses to obey either spur or bridle. But my long whip, and a smart rap from my *cajado*, soothe the mule, and my sweet guitar and merry madrigal, the maiden. I am a thousand times happier than Pedro! I never could endure either domestic or military control, and would rather be Lazaro Gomez, with his whip and his mules, than the stately king of the Spanish nation. I have the bright sun, the purple wine, my cigar, and the red-cheeked peasant-girls to kiss and dance with,—and what would mortal man have more? *Bueno!*"

He concluded by throwing himself into an attitude, and flourishing his sombrero round his head with a theatrical air. Ronald smiled; but he thought that, notwithstanding all this display, and Lazaro's frequent assertions that he was happier than Pedro, a little envy continued to lurk in a corner of his merry and honest heart.

"But has Pedro never done aught for you, Lazaro, in all his good fortune?" asked Ronald.

"Oh, señor! his lady wife, disliking that her brother-in-law should be treading a-foot over sierra and plain at a mule's tail, gave me the post of *Escrivano del Numero* at Truxillo, which I kept for somewhere about eight weeks. But I always grew sad when I

heard the merry jangle of mules' bells; and one morning, unable to restrain myself longer, I tossed my Escrivano's cope and rod to *Satanas,* seized my whip and sombrero, and once more took to the road as a merry-hearted muleteer of Merida, and neither Pedro nor the condessa have been able to catch me since."

"I am happy to find you are such a philosopher," said Ronald, with a sigh, which was not unnoticed by the muleteer.

"I could say that, *Señor Caballero,* which would make you far happier," said he, with a glance of deep meaning. "But," he added, pointing to the armed bandit, who kept a look-out on the bartizan near them, "but there are unfriendly ears near us."

"Speak fearlessly, Lazaro!" said Ronald eagerly, while his heart bounded with expectation. "I know that rascal to be a Guipuscoan, who understands as little of pure Castilian as of Greek. In heaven's name, Lazaro, what have you to tell me? I implore you to speak!"

"Señor," said the muleteer, lowering his voice to a whisper, "you have thrice asked me about Don Alvaro, and I have thrice delayed to tell you what I know: good news should be divulged cautiously. Well, señor, the famous cavalier of Estremadura has encamped three hundred horse and foot among the mountains near Elizondo. He comes armed with a commission from the king, and his minister Don Diego de Avallo, to root out and utterly destroy this

nest of wasps, or *cientipedoros.* The place is to be assailed about midnight; so look well to yourself, señor, that the villains do not poniard you in the fray; and, if you have any opportunity to aid us, I need not ask you to do so. I am to be Don Alvaro's guide, as I know every foot of ground hereabout as well as I do at Merida, having paid toll here twenty times. But this will be my last visit of the kind; and I came hither only to reconnoitre and learn their pass-word, in case it should be needed. Keep a brave spirit in your breast for a few hours longer, señor, and perhaps, when the morning sun shines down the long valley yonder, Alosegui and his comrades will be hanging round the battlement, like beads on a chaplet. I pray to the Santa Gadea of Burgos that the night be dark, that we may the more easily take the rogues by surprise."

Ronald's astonishment and joy at the sudden prospect of liberation revealed to him by Lazaro Gomez, deprived him of the power of utterance for a time. He was about to display some extravagant signs of pleasure, and to embrace the muleteer, when the keen cold glance of the Guipuscoan bandit, who was watching them narrowly, recalled him to a sense of his danger. He almost doubted the reality of the story, and narrowly examined the broad countenance of the burly muleteer; but truth and honesty were stamped on every line of it. The horizon of Ronald's fortune was about to clear up again. He felt giddy—almost stunned with the suddenness of

the intelligence, and his heart bounded with the wildest exultation at the prospect of speedy liberty, and of vengeance for the thousands of insults to which he had been subjected while a prisoner in the Torre de los Frayles.

When Lazaro departed, Stuart gave him the only token he could send to Don Alvaro,—a button of his coat, bearing a thistle and the number "92." He desired him to acquaint the cavalier that it would be requisite to provide planks to cross the chasm before the tower, otherwise the troops would fail to take its inmates by surprise.

This advice was the means of saving Stuart's life at a very critical juncture.

CHAPTER VII.

SPANISH LAW.

" Hard the strife, and sore the slaughter,
But I won the victory,—
Thanks to God, and to the valour
Of Castilian chivalry."

The Cid Rodrigo.

As nearly as Ronald could judge by the position of the sun,—being without a watch,—it was about the hour of three in the afternoon when Lazaro departed.

It was yet nine hours to midnight, and although that time seemed an age to look forward to, yet so full was his mind of joy, and crowding thoughts of gladness, hopes, and fears, that evening surprised him long before he imagined it to be near; and he had much ado in preserving his usual cold and serene look, and concealing the tumult of new ideas which excited him from the insolent bravoes, who were continually swaggering about, and, according to their usual wont, jostling him rudely at every corner and place where he encountered them. To remonstrate would have been folly, and to these petty annoyances he always submitted quietly.

On this last eventful evening he submitted to the penance of dining at the same table with the banditti, and even condescended to 'trouble' his friend the padre for a piece of broiled kid; but, as soon as the repast was ended, he withdrew to the tower-head. He preferred to be alone, almost dreading that his important secret might be read by Alosegui, Cifuentes, or any other who bent his scowling and lack-lustre eyes upon him.

At times, too, there came into his mind a doubt of the truth of Lazaro's story; but that idea was too sickening to bear, and he dismissed it immediately.

The sun had set. Masses of dun clouds covered the whole sky, which gradually became streaked with crimson and gold to the westward, where the rays of the sun yet illumined and coloured the huge mountains of vapour, although his light was fast leaving the earth.

The appearance of the sky and aspect of the scenery were wonderful and glorious. The whole landscape was covered with a red hue, as if it had been deluged by a red shower. The mountain streamlet wound through the valley of the Torre de los Frayles, like a long gilded snake, towards the base of a dark mountain, where appeared part of the Bidassoa, gleaming under the warm sky like a river of liquid fire. Beautiful as the scene was, Ronald seemed too much occupied with his own stirring thoughts to admire it, or to survey any part with

curiosity, save that which, by gradually assuming a more sombre hue, announced the approach of night. It was not easy for him to observe a landscape with an artist's eye, while placed in the predicament in which he then found himself.

He remembered, with peculiar bitterness, the countless mortifications and insults which he had received from Alosegui, the padre, and many others, and he contemplated with gloomy pleasure the display which these master-rogues would make when receiving, by the cord or the bullet, the just reward of all their enormities. He remembered with pleasure that he had never broken the parole of honour he had pledged to these miscreants,—and truly he had been sorely tempted. Owing to their irregular and dissipated course of life, more than one opportunity of escape and flight had presented itself.

"I expect a storm to-night, señor," said Gaspar, breaking in abruptly on his meditations.

"Indeed, señor!"

The other swore a mighty oath, which I choose not to repeat. "*San Stephano el Martir! si, señor,* —and no ordinary storm either. We shall miss our prize of a rich hidalgo of Alava, who, with an escort of twenty armed men, would have departed to-night from a posada a few miles from this, and meant to bivouac at a place on the hill-side, of which the inn-keeper, who is an old friend of mine, sent us all due notice. Look you: *hombre!* the sky grows

dark almost while we look upon it, and the clouds, in masses of black and red, descend on every side, like gloomy curtains, to shut out the sun from our view, and the wind, which blows against our faces, seems like the very breath of hell! Pooh! this is just such a night as one might expect to see our very good friend the devil abroad."

"He is no friend of mine, Señor Alosegui, although he may be a particular one of yours," said Ronald with a smile.

"By the holy house of Nazareth!" swore the bandit, "you may come to a close acquaintance with him after you have served for a time, as I expect you shall, in our honourable company."

"Well; but what of the storm?" asked Ronald, more interested about that, and unwilling to quarrel with his captor when there was so near a prospect of release. "What leads you to suppose there will be one to-night?"

"These few rain-drops now falling are large and round; hark, how they splash on the battlement! The valley, the sierra, the tower, the river, and every thing bear a deep saffron tint, partaking of the hue of the troubled sky. *Santos!* we shall have a storm roaring among the mountains and leaping along the valleys to-night, which will cause the old droning monks at Maya to grow pale as they look upon each other's fat faces, and while they mumble their *aves,* count their beads, and bring forth the morsel of the true cross to scare away *Satanas* and his imps

of evil. By-the-by, speaking of Maya reminds me of your case, señor. A train of mules, which crossed the Pyrenees without paying us our customary toll, are on their return homeward from Bayonne to Maya, laden with the very best of all the good things this world affords for the use of the pious and abstaining fathers of the convent of Saint Francis. Forty men, commanded by Narvaez Cifuentes, will set out to-morrow to meet our friends in the Pass of Maya, and a sharp engagement will probably take place. A priest is with them; on his shoulder he bears the banner of Saint Francis of Assissi, but if they imagine that we hidalgos of fortune will respect it, the holy fathers are wofully mistaken. The mules are escorted by a party of armed peasants, commanded by an old acquaintance of Gorgorza, the padre Porko, who is as brave as the Cid, and has served with honour in the guerilla bands during the war of independence. The muleteers are all stout fellows, too, and being well armed with *cajados*, *trabucas*, and long knives, will likely show fight,—and, truly, Narvaez will see some sharp work. Now, hark you, señor; if you are willing to join him and his brave companions, you will have an opportunity of making your first essay as a cavalier of fortune under a very distinguished commander. Do this, señor, and you will live among us honoured and respected, as an equal, a friend, and a brave comrade. If you fall in conflict, all is at an end; but if taken by the authorities, to suffer martyrdom by the

law on the gallows, the *garrote,* or the wheel, then you will have the glory of dying amid a vast multitude, upon whose sympathy the fame of your exploits will draw largely. You like not my proposition? Well, *señor caballero,* I have to acquaint you that I shall not be able to resist the fierce importunities of Narvaez Cifuentes, and those who are his particular friends. Their poniards are ready to leap from their scabbards against you now,—*now* that all chance of your being ransomed has failed. I have a sort of friendship for you, señor, because, instead of supplicating for life, you have rather seemed to defy fearlessly the terrors of death; the which stubborness of soul, if it wins not the pity, certainly excites the admiration of the jovial *picaros,* my comrades. You are a fine fellow over the chess-board or wine-cup, and your bearing would be complete if you would follow the example of Cifuentes, and swear and swagger a little at times. But you will acknowledge that the flowing ease of action and expression which distinguishes that accomplished cavalier, are difficult of imitation."

"I must confess they are, Señor Gaspar," replied Ronald, who could scarcely help smiling at the other's manner, which had in it a strange mixture of impudence, and part serious, part banter. "But I have really no desire to become the pupil of your friend."

"As you please, *amigo mio;* as you please," replied Alosegui, speaking slowly as he puffed at his cigar;

for, like a true Spaniard, he smoked from the time he opened his eyes in the morning till he closed them again at night. "I once saw you perform the bandit to the very life in the *Posada de los Representes* at Aranjuez, when the British officers acted *La Gitana*, and some of Lope de Vega's pieces, for the amusement of themselves and the ladies of the city. You are a superb imitator, and, under the tuition of Narvaez, would, I doubt not, fulfil my utmost expectations."

"The devil take Narvaez!" muttered Ronald, who was getting impatient of Gaspar's style of speech.

"All in good time," said the other quietly. "You have been enemies of old, I believe; some affair of rivalry, in which Cifuentes was successful. I understand perfectly; but in our community among the Pyrenees here, we have no such petty feelings of dislike. However, señor," continued the robber, suddenly changing his satirical tone for a stern and bullying one; "however, I would have you to think well of all I have said, as I should be sorry to see your bones cast into the vast depth of the chasm, to swell the grisly company there. So give me a definite answer to-morrow, señor, before Narvaez departs for Maya, or fatal results may ensue."

He flourished the paper cigar which he held between two fingers and withdrew, nodding significantly as his tall and bulky figure descended the narrow staircase leading down from the paved roof of the tower.

Ronald, who was glad of his strange friend's departure, turned again to watch the long vista of the valley, which was now involved in darkness. He would probably have remained there till midnight, but he was soon compelled to follow Alosegui, as the storm, which had long been threatening, now descended in all its fury.

The atmosphere became dense and close, while the sky grew rapidly darker and darker, till it assumed the dreary blackness of a winter night, and an ocean of rain descended on the earth with such violence, that it was a wonder the little tower was not levelled beneath it like a house of cards. The thunder-peals were grand and sublime: louder and louder than a thousand broadsides, they roared as if heaven and earth were coming together.

The banditti grew pale as they viewed each other's grim visages in the blue glare of the lightning. They grew pale as death, and their "felon souls" quaked within them, for there is a terrible something in the sound of thunder, which appals most men. It seems like God's own voice speaking in the firmament.

But Alosegui called for lights and for liquor, and pig-skins and jars were speedily set abroach; the half-ruined hall was soon illuminated by candles of all sorts and sizes, which streamed and guttered, untrimmed and unheeded, in the currents of air that passed freely through the place, although the crazy windows were covered up with boards, and stuffed with cloaks, bags of straw, &c. to keep out the wind and rain.

Assembled in the dilapidated hall, if it deserved such a name, the banditti withdrew their guards and scouts, and forgot the storm without amid the laughter and brutal uproar of their carousal. Wine and the strong heady *aguadiente*—a liquor not unlike Scottish whisky,—were flowing like water, and the noise within the Torre de los Frayles almost equalled the uproar of the elements without.

Ronald's spirits fell, and he grew sad; he expected that there would be no attack that night, and he pitied the unfortunate soldiers who were exposed on a night-march to such a storm. From old experience he well knew the misery of such a duty. He withdrew from the scene of bandit merriment, and seeking a solitary place, watched the elemental war without, and gazed with mingled awe and pleasure on the bright streaks of forked lightning as they darted through the sky, lighting up the shattered cliffs, the mountain tops, the deep valley, and the swollen river,—displaying them vividly, tinging them all over with a pale sulphurous blue, and causing the whole scene to assume a wild and ghastly appearance. Again the thunder roared, then died away, and nought could be heard but the howling wind, and the rain rushing fiercely down from the parted clouds.

After continuing for about two hours, the storm at last began to abate, and Stuart's hopes of freedom revived. It yet wanted some hours of midnight, but he greatly feared that the fury of such a tempest

would scatter Don Alvaro's command of horse and foot, drench them to the skin, and destroy their arms and ammunition. Yet he still continued at the loop-hole, watching the dispersion of the clouds, the appearance of the stars, and the increasing light of the moon as the successive shrouds of gauze-like vapour withdrew from her shining face.

While thus engaged, he was aroused by the sound of some one standing behind him. He turned sharply round, and beheld Cifuentes, flushed with his potations and ripe for brawl and uproar, reeling about with a horn of liquor in one hand and a drawn stiletto in the other. In his drunken insolence he dashed the cup, which was full of the rich wine of Ciudad Real, in Ronald's face, and he was for a moment almost blinded by the liquor. Full of fury at the insult, he rushed upon the robber, and grasping him by his strong and bull-like neck, tripped up his heels and hurled him to the floor in a twinkling. He dashed the head of the aggressor twice on the pavement to stun him, and wresting the poniard from his grasp, would inevitably have slain him with it, had he not been prevented by the interference of the *ci-devant* padre Gorgorza and others. He was grasped from behind and drawn away from his antagonist, who had very little breath left in his body after such a knock down. Drawn daggers were gleaming on every side; but the ruffians stood so much in awe of Alosegui's formidable strength and vengeance, that they longed yet feared to strike Stuart with their

weapons. In the grasp of so many, his arms were pinioned fast, so that his rage could only be indicated by the heaving of his breast, by the fire which glared in his eyes, and by the swollen veins of his forehead.

A short pause ensued, until Narvaez staggered up from the floor, completely sobered, but at the same time completely infuriated by the assault which he had sustained. He at first howled like a wild beast, and sprang upon his helpless prisoner with the intention of poniarding him on the spot; but suddenly changing his mind, he laughed wildly, and swore and muttered while pointing to a rope which, unhappily, was at that time dangling from the stone mullion of a window, about twelve feet from the floor, and he proposed to hang Stuart here. The idea was greeted with a perfect storm of yells and applause.

A cold perspiration burst over the form of the captive, and he struggled with a strength and determination of which hitherto he had believed himself incapable; but his efforts were as those of a child, in the hands of so many. He had to contend with forty devils incarnate, well armed, and flushed with rage and wine.

How eagerly at that moment Stuart longed for the appearance of Alvaro, and how deeply he deplored his having given loose to passion, when, by restraining it, another hour had perhaps seen him free! But he longed in vain, for Alvaro came not, and his regrets were fruitless. He was to die now, and by the ignominious cord!

As they dragged him across the apartment, he called frantically on Alosegui; but that worthy lay on the floor in a corner insensible,—or perhaps pretending to be so,—from the quantity of liquor he had imbibed. In this dreadful extremity, when hovering on the very verge of death, Ronald condescended to remind Cifuentes that he saved his life at Merida, when Don Alvaro was about to hang him like a cur in the chapter-house of a convent there.

But Narvaez only grinned, as, with the assistance of his great row of teeth, he knotted a loop on the cord, and said that it was by the rope, the bullet, or the dagger he always paid his debts, and that he had permitted Stuart to live too long to satisfy his scruples as an honourable Spaniard.

"Up with him, *amigos mios!*" cried he, flourishing the hateful noose. "*Carajo!* pull, and with a strong hand!"

At that moment Ronald uttered a cry of triumphant joy; Narvaez dropped the cord, and the banditti started back, cowering with alarm. The stairs and the doorway of the apartment were filled with soldiers, the sight of whose bristling bayonets, with the shout of "Death to the *bandidos! Viva el Rey!*" struck terror on the recreant garrison of the Torre de los Frayles. Several officers rushed forward with their swords drawn, and in the tall cavalier with the steel helmet, corslet, and cavalry uniform, Ronald recognised his old friend Alvaro de Villa Franca.

"Dogs and villains!" he exclaimed, "surrender! But expect no mercy; for I swear to you, by the head of the king, that ye shall all die, and before another day dawns,—ay, every man of you!"

By this time the hall was crowded by about fifty infantry, while a number of dismounted dragoons, armed with their swords and carbines, occupied the stair and adjacent passages. The cowards whose den had been so suddenly surprised, forgetting to use the weapons with which they were so well equipped, fell upon their knees, every man excepting Narvaez. They cried for mercy in the most abject terms, but the cavalier turned a deaf ear to their entreaties, as they had done to hundreds before.

"Señor Don Ronald!" said he, embracing Stuart, "our Lady has been singularly favourable to us to-night. We toiled our way over these rocky mountains, notwithstanding the storm, and have truly arrived at a most critical moment. Our friends of the Friars', or rather the Thieves' Tower, shall find that I have not made a fruitless journey from Madrid. But first allow me to introduce an old friend, Don Pedro Gomez."

A number of ceremonious Castilian bows were exchanged, after which the cavalier continued,—

"Immediately on receiving your letter, and obtaining all the information requisite about this den of the devil, I ordered the bearer, Juan—Juan—I forget his name, to be hanged; and, waiting on Diego de Avallo, our secretary for home affairs, I procured a commis-

sion under the great seal to proceed as I chose in the duty of rooting out this nest of ruffians, who have so long been the terror of the country hereabout, and by the sacred shrine of the Virgin del Pilar! I will avenge your captivity and their crimes most signally. Guard well the staircase and doorway with our own troopers, Don Pedro."

The *ci-devant* sergeant was garbed and equipped like Alvaro, and had evidently acquired very much the air of a well-bred cavalier.

Excepting Alosegui, who stared about him with an air of drunken stupidity, the robbers were completely sobered, and remained on their knees, crying for mercy,—mercy in the name of the Holy Virgin, of her Son, of the Saints, and in the name of Heaven; but stern looks and charged bayonets were the only, and certainly fitting reply, and one by one they were stripped of their poniards and pistols, which were broken and destroyed by the soldiers. Narvaez alone scorned to kneel, but he stood scowling around him with a dogged, sullen, and pale visage, while his knees quaked and trembled violently.

"Alvaro," said Stuart, "look upon this sulky ruffian, who is too proud, or perhaps too frightened, to kneel."

"Cifuentes of Albuquerque!" cried the stern cavalier, in a tone almost rising into a shriek. "*Dios mio!* the destroyer of Catalina, of my poor sister! Ah, master-fiend! most daring of villains! Heaven has at last delivered you to me, that you may receive

the reward of your long life of crime. At last you shall die by my hand!" He was about to run him through the heart, but checked the half-given thrust.

"No!" he continued, "you shall *not* die thus. To fall by my sword is a death fit for a hidalgo or cavalier. Thou shalt pass otherwise from this earth to hell, and die like a dog as thou art!"

Taking his heavy Toledo sabre by the blade, he aimed a blow at Narvaez, which demolished his lower jaw, and laid him on the floor. Upon the throat of the writhing robber he placed the heel of his heavy jack-boot, and watched, without the slightest feeling of compunction or remorse, the horrible distortions and death-agonies exhibited in his visage, and from his compressed throat withdrew not his foot till he had completely strangled him, and he lay a blackened, bloated, and disfigured corse on the floor.

"At length Catalina is avenged!" exclaimed the cavalier, turning with fierce exultation to Stuart, who had witnessed without regret or interference the retribution which had so suddenly hurled the once-formidable Narvaez to the shades.

The fears of the banditti were renewed on beholding this terrible scene, and again they implored piteously to be spared, offering to become Alvaro's slaves, imploring that they might be sent to dig in his mines in Estremadura, or sent to the galleys, or any where,—but, oh! to spare their wretched lives, and they would offend against God and man no

more. The stern cavalier listened as if he heard them not. He ordered them to be pinioned; and Lazaro Gomez appearing with a huge bundle of the cords with which he bound his mules' packages, tied the *ladrones* in pairs, binding them hard and fast back to back.

Meanwhile some of the soldiers were ransacking the tower "from turret to foundation-stone," expecting to find vaults and strong rooms piled with vast heaps of treasure. But the *soldados* were wofully disappointed; not a cross or coin fell into their hands, save what they obtained in the pouches of the thieves, whom they pricked remorselessly with their bayonets and otherwise maltreated, to force them to reveal where their plunder was deposited.

Whether the wretches were obstinate, or had nothing to conceal, I know not; but the exasperation of the soldiers was greatly increased when they discovered that they should return without the gold, the jewellery, and the consecrated images, with which they hoped to have stuffed their havresacks.

"This is well," said Alvaro, watching with grim satisfaction the adroit manner in which Lazaro linked the rogues together. "On my honour, Lazaro, you should have been a general instead of a mule-driver. But what is wisdom in the former, the world stigmatizes as mere cunning in the latter. Believe me, Señor Stuart, the entire success of this expedition is principally owing to this sturdy rogue of Merida, on whom I would bestow a cherry-cheeked bride and a

thousand hard ducats, if he would only quit mule-driving, and settle quietly down within the sound of the bells of San Juan. He was our guide to-night during the whole of the tempest, and notwithstanding its fury and the darkness, which was so intense that I could scarcely see my horse's ears, he conducted us up the mountains, by some chasm or gorge, safely and surely, horse and foot, as only the devil—"

"Or a muleteer of Merida, señor."

"Ay, Lazaro, or a muleteer of Merida, could have done. He provided planks for us to cross the chasm here, which otherwise must have brought us to a dead halt; and it was entirely owing to his tact and observation that we were enabled to surprise the villains at so critical a time. A sore penance you must have endured, my friend, in spending so many months in such company; but it might be the less regretted, as it will probably go to your account of time in purgatory. You shall have most ample satisfaction, however, before the night is much older, for all the injuries you have suffered from them."

Ronald was so much overjoyed at his deliverance, that he could scarcely find words to express his feelings, and the obligations which he owed to Don Alvaro; but, with a spirit of forgiveness highly honourable, he began to intercede for the lives of some of the banditti, who had not made themselves quite so obnoxious as the rest while he was kept in durance among them: but Alvaro replied, that the

commands of Don Diego de Avallo, the Spanish minister, expressly enjoined that no quarter should be given, as it was the intention of government to strike a general terror into the banditti which infested every part of the country, and that they must be cut off, root and branch. Ronald then proposed that they should be marched down the mountains to Vittoria, or any other town, and there delivered over to the civil authorities; but Villa Franca said that he had no time to spare, and the horde of the Torre de los Frayles must be instantly disposed of.

"We settle these matters quicker in Spain than you do in Britain, where the military are so simple as to permit themselves to be ruled by alcaldes and lawyers," said the cavalier, smiling and waving his hand with a decided air. "So we will leave these humbled bravoes to the tender care of Don Pedro Gomez, and then take our departure for the town of Maya, to which our horses will convey us in a few hours. Thank Heaven, the storm has completely passed away, and the appearance of the moon gives promise of a glorious night. Without her assistance we should assuredly break our necks in descending from this cursed eagle's nest."

The soldiers fell back respectfully, as Ronald and Alvaro left the crowded hall. Ronald's heart was dancing with delight as they descended the worn and dilapidated stair, upon the steps of which he had not trodden for five months since the unhappy night on which he first entered this Pyrenean prison-

house. Pausing a moment, to direct that the head of Cifuentes should be struck off, according to the Spanish custom, and placed upon a pole in the Pass of Maya, the cavalier descended after Stuart. But the despairing cries and fervent supplications of the prisoners followed them; and some, on finding that their last moment was come, began to shriek for a priest in the most heart-rending accents of superstitious terror and despair: but no priest was there, to hear their horrible confessions.

"*A padre, a padre, O noble señores! A padre, por amor de Santa Maria, el Madre de Dios!*" howled the despairing Gorgorza de la Puente, as the soldiers dragged him forth. "Noble cavalier! valiant soldiers! destroy me not, body and soul! I am a holy priest, señores! Oh! I was one once. Hear me, for the love of Heaven! I have much to repent of, and terrible things to confess. I poniarded a monk in San Sebastian, and stole the holy vessels from his altar. I—I—"

"Quick with the rope!" cried Pedro. "Twist it about his neck, and stop his mouth before he raises his master the devil, by speaking thus."

"Mercy! mercy!" shrieked the other, struggling furiously, as three stout soldiers dragged him to the summit of the tower. "Mercy yet a little while! I carried off a lady of Subijana de Alava, and robbed her of life and honour among the mountains. I robbed—holy saints! good soldiers! will no one hear my confession? Can no one hear me?—can

no man forgive me? Accursed may ye be! bloody wolves and pitiless— *O misericordia, mio Dios! O Santissima Maria!*" and he was launched into eternity.

Nearly twenty men were pouring forth rhapsodies like the above, and the tower became filled with sounds of lamentation, shrieks, and cries,—groans, prayers, and the wildest blasphemy mingled with the most pious ejaculations; but it was a just retribution which had fallen upon these wicked men.

Ronald's heart beat lightly as he crossed the terrible chasm, where so many unfortunates had found a tomb. He had been a captive—on the very verge of death, and now he was free, and "himself again."

The bright moon was shining aloft like a globe of silver, and the dewy sides of the hills, the rivulets which trickled from the rocks, the sleepy stream at the bottom of the valley, and every violet-cup and blade of grass were gleaming in its radiant light.

At a little distance from the chasm were a party of Alvaro's cavalry, escorting the horses of those who were engaged in the tower, and their tall lance-heads, bright helmets and cuirasses, were flashing and glittering in the moonlight. Their caparisoned war-horses were sleek-skinned and long-tailed Andalusians, and were cropping the grass with their bridles loose.

"Pedro is a rough dog," said the cavalier, looking complacently back. "He is stringing a fair chaplet for the devil in the merry moonlight. In ten minutes

he will have the *ladrones* all dangling over the battlement. *Santos!* 'tis not work for soldiers' hands; but the dogs deserve not to die by military weapons, for they are as arrant cowards as ever blanched before the eye of a brave man. Look back, just now, Don Ronald!"

Ronald turned round, and beheld with disgust the Spanish soldiers forcing the pinioned banditti over the walls, where they hung by the neck, dangling and writhing in couples. Although he was at some distance from the tower, he could distinctly perceive their convulsions, and heard their heels rattling against the walls, from the ruinous battlement of which the stones were tumbling every instant into the chasm with a thundering sound, which caused the horses of the lancers to snort and rear. It was a ghastly sight.

"Now, then, ho for Maya! I believe we shall find our way across the mountains without the aid of Lazaro, now the bright moon is shining with such splendour," was the exclamation of Alvaro as they mounted and set forth. Stuart rode beside him on the horse of an orderly, and four Spanish lancers followed as an escort. They descended towards the valley by the steep and perilous path-way, which was so narrow as to admit but one horseman at a time, and often overhung the abyss, passing so close to the edge of the beetling craigs, that the eye scarcely dared to scan the depth below. It was well for the riders that the horses they rode

had been accustomed to stand fire, otherwise some lives might have been lost as they descended the rocks. Before they were half-way down, a sudden glare shot across the sky from the mountains above them. A terrific shock and explosion followed, and the rock of the Torre de los Frayles was seen enveloped in a cloud of black smoke, which, after curling upwards, floated away through the clear blue sky.

"Keep your horses tight by the head!" cried Alvaro, as his mettlesome steed kicked and plunged in the narrow path, whilst Ronald expected to see him vanish over the rocks every second. "Draw well on the curb, señors; or, *diavolo!* some of us will be in the other world presently!"

Their cattle, however, were soon quieted, and Stuart again looked towards the place where the Torre de los Frayles had stood, but no trace of the tower was visible. The smoke had dispersed, and the rock was bare. The sound of a cavalry trumpet, calling 'to mount,' was heard soon afterwards, and the roll of an infantry drum echoed away among the mountains.

"Pedro has put powder in the vaults and blown up the place, that it may never again become a nest for such birds of prey," said Alvaro. "'Tis a tower of friars or thieves no longer, but in one moment has been dashed into fifty thousand fragments of stone. Here comes Pedro on our rear; the troop are descending the hill."

As he spoke, a long line of glittering casques and

spears, moving in single file, appeared descending the rocks, and vanishing in succession under the shadow of the impending cliff, behind which the moon was shining, and casting long gigantic shadows across the valley below. The soldiers brought with them the now crest-fallen and dejected Alosegui, who, as Ronald's former preserver and defender, was, at his earnest intercession, alone permitted to escape the terrible retribution so successfully wrought on his guilty confreres.

On inquiring about Carlos de Avallo, to whose evil influence Ronald believed his captivity to have been mainly owing, Villa Franca informed him that a duel had taken place between that violent young cavalier and Don Alvarado. It had been fought on the *Puerta del Sol* of Elizondo, about mid-day four months previously, and ended by Carlos being run through the body by Alvarado, who, to escape the vengeance of his victim's uncle, Don Diego, had absconded to South America, and had not been since heard of.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ACQUAINTANCE, AND "OLD ENGLAND ON THE LEE."

"Spain! farewell for ever!
These banished eyes shall view thy courts no more:
A mournful presage tells my heart, that never
Gonsalva's steps again shall press thy shore."

M. G. Lewis.

"PHO!" said the count, as they rode into Maya, "amid all the things of which we have been talking, I had quite forgotten to say that there is a countryman of yours here in this town, one who takes the utmost interest in your concerns—why, I know not; he said he was no relative. We became acquainted at Madrid, and, on hearing of your story, he proposed at once to accompany me in this expedition against the robbers in the Pyrenees and other places. He is a spirited, but rather impetuous old cavalier. He has seen service, too, in the Low Countries and other parts, but appears of late to have become somewhat addicted to ease and good living, which has enlarged the circumference of his stomach more than he wishes, and has rendered him subject to a

disease we know little of in Spain,—the gout. A sudden fit of it seized him when we were marching *en route* to your rescue, and the worthy old hidalgo was compelled, much against his will, to quarter himself in Maya till our return. He awaits us yonder in the *Posada de los Caballeros,* opposite to the convent of Saint Francis."

This being nearly the whole of the information respecting "his countryman," with which Alvaro was able to furnish his companion, Ronald was not a little surprised, on alighting at the miserable posada, to find reclining, in dressing-gown and slippers, in an easy chair, with one leg, swollen and swathed in flannel, resting on a foot-stool, and with a heap of newspapers, guide-books, decanters, cigars, a brace of pistols, and a light-dragoon sabre displayed upon a table before him, no less a person than his noble competitor the Earl of Hyndford. The earl received his young rival kindly, displayed much generous feeling towards him as a brother soldier, laughed heartily at his scarecrow appearance,—for his long residence in the tower had told immensely upon Ronald's rather scanty wardrobe,—and finally, after having heard his story, and repeatedly and energetically d—d the banditti, the Horse-Guards, the gout, and the Peninsula, and having assured his young friend that though there might have been a little weeping, and so forth, on his account at home, there were no broken hearts nor any symptoms of forgetfulness, he promised him—on behalf of his

friend 'York,' with whom he had formerly served as aide-de-camp, and his friend Hal Torrens, who, though a war-office man and a staff officer, was a good fellow enough—the immediate restoration of his forfeited commission, and letters to the parties named that should put all right with respect to it.

While a prisoner in the Torre de los Frayles, Ronald had remained in total ignorance of several events of some importance; and, though he was by no means astonished to learn from the earl that his name had disappeared from the army list, and that he was superseded, it did occasion him some slight surprise to learn that Buonaparte had escaped from Elba, that he had entered Paris in triumph, and was once more at the head of the French army, surrounded by many of his old marshals, and supported by the old enthusiasm of his devoted soldiers. His own regiment, Ronald heard, had been ordered to Flanders, where some sharp fighting was expected to occur forthwith.

Three days afterwards he found himself on board the packet at Passages, bound for London.

On his parting with Alvaro, that cavalier presented him with his own gold cross of St. Jago, begging him to wear it as a token of remembrance. It was not without feelings of the deepest regret that he bade adieu to this noble and chivalric Spaniard; and he felt all that depression of spirit which a frank and honest heart unavoidably suffers after a leave-taking. Hyndford he expected to meet again, but

the cavalier of Merida never. However, such sensations of regret were transitory; he had followed the drum too long to find parting with a brave or merry companion a new matter.

The vessel cast anchor in the Downs at night. It had "come to blow a sodger's wind," as the skipper said,—that is, a foul one; and there was no getting up the river at that time, when the goodly invention of steam-tugs was as yet unknown.

Next morning he landed with his baggage at Deal, and started in a post-chaise for London. Immediately on his arrival there, he despatched letters to Colonel Cameron, to Inchavon, and Lochisla, giving an account of the perils attendant on his detention in Spain, and safe arrival in England. In the fulness of his joy he also wrote to Sir Colquhoun Menteith of Cairntowis, a near relation, with whom his family had ever been at variance, and maintained a petty personal feud. But the old baronet never acknowledged the receipt of his letter, which caused Ronald to regret deeply that he had ever written to him or his son, who was then serving with the army in Flanders. The letter addressed to the old laird lay long at the post-house of Strathfillan, and turned from white to saffron in the window, among tape and needles, pins and thread-reels, until at last it was torn up and destroyed.

The others were received in due course by those to whom they were addressed, and all, save that to Sir Colquhoun, caused joy and congratulation; and

so long did the mess continue discussing his adventures, in all their various lights and shades, through the medium of the sixth, seventh, and eighth *allowances*, that it is credibly reported that only a third of the officers appeared on parade in the Park of Brussels next morning.

On the day after his arrival Stuart repaired to the Horse-Guards, to wait on the Duke of York, the commander-in-chief. He had no doubt that his case would be heard favourably by the good duke, whose well-known kindness and fellow-feeling for his brothers of the sword gained him the appropriate sobriquet of the "soldier's friend;" and he was one to whom the wife, the widow, or the child of a soldier, in their sorrow or destitution, never made an appeal in vain. His Royal Highness was not at the Horse-Guards that day, and Ronald was received by Sir Henry Torrens, a plump little man, whom he imagined at first to be the very personification of staff-office hauteur; but found, on further acquaintance, to be all that Hyndford painted him, and a deuced good fellow besides.

He received Stuart kindly, inquired after many of his old friends, opened his eyes widely at what he called the audacity of the brigands in detaining a British officer, read attentively the letters of Alvaro and Hyndford, appeared to take great interest in the affair, and gave the ominous official promise 'to see what could be done.'

Three days afterwards, however, an orderly of the

Life Guards brought Ronald an official packet from Sir Henry, notifying his re-appointment, and containing two orders,—one to proceed forthwith to join in Flanders, "where his services were much required;" and the other on the Paymaster-general for all his arrears of pay, and other sums due to him by Government, £400 "blood money" for wounds, and eighty guineas as compensation for the loss of his baggage when the Pass of Maya was forced by Marshal Soult two years before.

Ronald blessed the liberality of John Bull, who had not forgotten the fright of Napoleon's threatened invasion, and was more inclined to be grateful to his sons then, than now. The money-orders were very acceptable things, as they relieved Ronald from the necessity of drawing upon his father, whose involvements and expenses he supposed to be sufficient already.

"This is excellent," thought he. "I can now repay Hyndford, and travel comfortably post to Brussels. But yet, 'tis vexatious to proceed forthwith. I held out hopes to Alice, and the people in Perthshire, of seeing them all soon. Well, 'tis the fortune of war, and repining is worse than useless."

So he thought, as he elbowed his way along the crowded Strand towards the office of Mr. Bruce, the regimental agent, humming gaily as he went the old song—

"Oh, the Lowlands of Holland
Have parted my love and me," &c.

Most willingly, however, would he have applied for a short leave of absence, now so eminently his due, to enable him to pay a brief visit to his Perthshire friends, and see once again his beloved Alice before encountering anew the perils and hardships of war; but the exigencies of the service were pressing, his orders peremptory, and the fear of missing the glory of a new campaign reconciled him to the necessity of a speedy departure. He applied himself diligently to the business of instant preparation, and found relief for his excited feelings in the bustle attendant on acquiring a new outfit. A short time sufficed to procure him the necessary equipage for camp and field, and he was soon ready to resume active military duties.

CHAPTER IX.

FLANDERS.

"At length I made my option to take service
In that same legion of Auxiliaries,
In which we lately served the Belgian."

The Ayrshire Tragedy.

A FEW days afterwards he was on his way, hastening to join the army in Belgium. His orders were to travel with speed, as hostilities were expected daily. All Europe was alarmed, great events were expected, and mail and telegraph arrivals were watched with the most feverish anxiety.

On landing at Ostend, Stuart heard that Buonaparte had joined the French army, and had issued a proclamation calling to mind their former victories, and telling them that fresh dangers were to be dared and battles won; but he felt assured their familiarity with hardship and death, their steadiness, discipline, and inherent bravery, would make them, in every encounter, most signally victorious.

"Time will prove all this," thought Ronald, as, seated on an inverted keg, he was deciphering this proclamation in a French paper, while travelling

on the canal of Ostend in a flat-bottomed boat for Bruges.

The broad and waveless surface of the long yellow canal was gleaming under the meridian sun like polished metal; and, when standing erect on the roof or upper deck of the barge, he could see it for miles winding away through the country, which on every side was verdant and flat, like a vast bowling-green. The monotony of the scenery struck Stuart the more forcibly, because, as a Highlander, he could not help drawing comparisons between it and the tremendous hills, the solemn valleys, and the majestic rivers of his native Scotland. At times, a few bulbous-shaped boors, in steeple-crowned hats, or fur caps, and enormous breeches, appeared on the canal bank, singly or in groups, smoking their long pipes, and staring hard with their great lack-lustre eyes on the passing boat, the slow motion of which they would watch for miles, standing on the same spot, immovable as a milestone. Very plump and very red-cheeked country girls, wearing short petticoats, and making an unusual display of legs, which were more substantial than elegant, appeared tripping along the banks, bearing jars of milk or butter on their heads, where they were poised with miraculous exactness. Sometimes a party of these rustic fair ones passed in a gaudily-painted cart or waggon, all laughing and talking merrily,—their noisy vivacity forming a strange contrast with the sulky demeanour of the silent and phlegmatic boor, who sat smoking and

driving on the tram of the car, keeping his seat there with the same lurching motion that a bag of oats would have done. There is little disposition in Dutch or German blood to be gallant or cavalier-like.

Afar in the distance, where the landscape stretched away as level as the sea, were seen great squares of light green or bright yellow, showing where lay the fields of golden corn and other grain, waving, ripe and tall, everywhere ready for the sickle. In some places appeared a cluster of pretty little cottages, their walls white as alabaster and roofed with bright yellow thatch, embosomed among a grove of light willow trees, from the midst of which arose the tall and slender church spire, surmounted by a clumsy vane, around which flew scores of cawing rooks, fluttering and contesting for footing on the gilded weathercock. Sometimes the canal barge passed through the very midst of a farm and close to the mansion, with its deep, thatched roof, having walls of glaring white or yellow, and gaudy red or blue streaks six inches broad painted round each door and window,—the brass knocker on the green door, the burnished windows, the gilt vanes, and painted walls, all gleaming in the light of the sun. Contrasting with the rural dwelling, the parterres before it, the stack-yard behind, the ducks, the geese, the pigs, and the children in the yard, or among the reeds by the canal bank, appeared, perhaps close by a vessel of two hundred tons or so, laid up in ordi-

nary, or high and dry in the farm-yard, with hens roosting beside her keel. In some places these craft lay in small docks having a flood-gate, with their top-masts struck, their rigging and spars all dismantled, and stowed away below or on deck. Most of the Dutch and Belgian farmers are also ship-owners; and by means of those great and beautiful canals, which like veins intersect the whole country, they bring their craft to their farm-yards, perhaps fifty or eighty miles inland, and there keep them during the winter. They can thus the more readily load or provision them with their own farm produce, before they are again sent to sea.

As Ronald was totally ignorant of Dutch, and knew very little of French, he could neither converse with the boatmen nor the dull Flemish boors who happened to be passengers; and he passed his time monotonously enough, yawning over a few London newspapers, or watching every *schuytje* sculled along by its "twenty-breeched" boatmen.

In the evening, he arrived at the busy and opulent, but smoky town of Bruges; and hence, passing the night at an hotel, and rising next morning with the lark, he proceeded to Ghent, that city of bustle and bridges. On landing at one of the quays, he was surprised to observe a French soldier on sentry, walking briskly about before his box. When passing, monsieur came smartly to 'his front,' and presented arms. In traversing the streets, he met many French officers in undress, all of whom

politely touched their caps on passing. They all wore their swords and belts, and were to be seen promenading every where, singly or in parties, in the streets, on the bridges, on the quays, or flirting with the girls who kept the booths and fancy warehouses in the great square.

At the portal of a large and handsome mansion a British soldier of the line, and a Frenchman in the uniform of the garde-du-corps, were on duty *together* as sentinels. It was the residence of Louis XVIII., who, on the landing of Buonaparte, had accepted the asylum offered him by the King of the Netherlands, and now resided in Ghent, spending his time like some plodding citizen, when he should have been in the field aiding his allies, and heading the few soldiers of France who still remained true to him. A British guard was mounted at his residence, in addition to the garde-du-corps; and the officers dined every day at the royal table.

Of the French army, about seven hundred officers and a thousand soldiers remained staunch to Louis, when the whole of their comrades joined Napoleon *en masse.* The privates were are all quartered at Alost, but the officers he kept near his own person.

Warlike preparations were manifest every where around Ghent. Nearly eight thousand men were employed in repairing the ancient fortifications and raising new, digging ditches, mounting cannon, erecting bulwarks, forts, and gates; for rumours of the

coming strife, and of this invasion of Flanders by Buonaparte and his furious Frenchmen, were compelling the drowsy people to lay aside their phlegm, and show some courage, energy, and activity.

In the evening Ronald was roused by the ringing of the church bells, as for an alarm. A commotion and noise arose in the city, as if the people of Ghent had suddenly cast off their apathy, and set all their tongues to work. Above the increasing din he heard the officers and soldiers of the garde-du-corps crying *Vive le Roi! Vive Louis!* in that true turn-coat style, for which the French had become so notorious. Conceiving it to be some unlooked-for attack, he clasped on his belt, and repaired to a neighbouring *table d'hôte*, where a French officer informed him that the uproar was caused by the arrival of a courier, bearing intelligence that the entire French army was in motion, and headed by the Emperor,—while he spoke, a flush crossed his cheek, betraying the enthusiasm he could not conceal,—led by *their* Emperor, had crossed the Sambre, and were marching on Charleroi.

Anxious to join his regiment before hostilities began, and being heartily tired of the slow and chilly mode of travelling by canal barges, Stuart purchased a horse at Ghent, as no Belgian would lend one for hire. It was a poor-looking hack, and he paid for it thrice its real value. Leaving his baggage to be sent after him, he set off on the spur for Brussels, among whose plodding citizens the advance of the

French had stricken a terror beyond description. But two alternatives were before them in case of Wellington's defeat,—flight, or to remain and encounter, sack and slaughter; for well they knew that Napoleon would fearfully avenge the abandonment of his standard.

Ronald departed from Ghent at day-break, and halted for breakfast at Alost. He repaired to an hotel, where his uniform procured him every attention, but there was consternation pre-eminently visible in every Belgian face. Here he was informed that the first corps of the Prussian army, posted at Charleroi under the command of General Zeithen, had been attacked, and, after a sharp contest, compelled to retreat towards Fleurs. Notwithstanding their fears, the people boasted much of the Belgian troops, and declared that, when the strife was fairly begun, they would do wonders.

"Ah, why should we fear?" they repeated continually. "Lord Wellington has the Belgians with him."

Having been misdirected and sent far out of his way by one of the terrified natives, it was dark before the young soldier arrived at Brussels, where confusion, fear, and uproar reigned supreme. He was permitted to pass the fortifications and barriers only, after a great deal of troublesome altercation with the Belgic and German sentries and guards, who scrupled to admit an armed man without the parole. After entering, he found his poor horse in a state of

the utmost exhaustion. He had ridden nearly forty miles that day, and stood greatly in need of refreshment himself; but he was determined to travel on without halting, and to join the regiment at all risk and expense. He went straight to an hotel, and hired another horse, leaving twice its value, together with the Bucephalus he had purchased at Ghent, which was to be restored him on his return—when that should take place.

The French army were still pressing impetuously forward. Marshal Ney, in command of the left, had proceeded along the road for Brussels, and attacking the Prince of Saxe Weimar, drove him back from Frasnes to the famous position named *Les Quatre Bras;* while Napoleon, with his own immediate command, the right and centre, followed the retreating Prussians towards Brie and Sombref.

At half-past three on that morning (the 16th June), the British had marched out of Brussels towards the enemy. Fear was impressed on every heart and visible on every face after their departure.

The bells were tolling mournfully, and many persons were lamenting in the streets as if the day of universal doom was at hand. The churches were lighted for night service when Stuart entered the city. From the tall Gothic windows of the church of St. Gudule, vivid flakes of variously-tinted light streamed on the groups of anxious and gossiping citizens, who were assembled in knots and crowds in the great Sablon square, or on the magnificent flight

of steps ascending to the doorway, through which streams of radiance, and strains of choral music, came gushing into the streets below. The bells in the two great towers were booming away in concert with others, and flinging their deep hollow tones to the midnight wind. Business of every kind was suspended; the shops were shut; and the paunchy magistrates were all in the *Hôtel de Ville*, assembled in solemn conclave, consulting, not about the best means of defence, but the best mode,—to use a homely phrase,—"of cutting their stick," and without beat of drum.

CHAPTER X.

CAMERON OF FASSIFERN.

"Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Sleep the sleep that knows no breaking;
Dream of battled fields no more,
Days of danger, nights of waking."

Lady of the Lake.

As soon as the military traveller presented himself before the cathedral of St. Gudule, the lustre streaming from the sixteen illuminated chapels of which filled the surrounding streets with a light rivalling that of day, a dense crowd gathered around him, barring his passage on every side, and clamorously demanding, "What news from the army?"

It was with the utmost difficulty that he could make these terrified cits understand he was bound for the field, and wished to know which way the British troops had marched. His only reply from them was, "The French—the French are coming on!" Fear had besotted them. He told them they would serve Belgium better by getting arms and joining her allies, than by thronging the streets like frightened sheep. This was answered by a groan, and the feeble cry of "*vivat!*"

Cursing them for cowards, in his impatience to get on he spurred his horse upon the crowd, and drove them back. By their increasing number, an officer of the Brunswick-Oels corps, who was riding down the street at full speed, was likewise stopped; and having a little knowledge of the English language, he learned Ronald's dilemma, and invited him to be his companion, as he was following the route of the army. They galloped through the Namur gate, and in five minutes Bruxelles, with its lights and din, fear and uproar, was far behind them. They were pressing at full speed along the road leading to the then obscure village of Waterloo. It wound through the dark forest of Soignies; the oak, the ash, and the elm were in full foliage, and, for many miles of the way, their deep shadows rendered the road as dreary as can be conceived.

The speed at which the travellers rode completely marred any attempt at conversation, and the only sounds which broke the silence were their horses' hoofs echoing in the green glades around them. When at intervals the moonlight streamed between the clouds and the trees, Ronald turned to survey his companion, whose singular equipment added greatly to the gloomy effect produced by the dark forest, which stretched around them for many miles in every direction.

The cavalry officer belonged to the Brunswick troops, who, with their duke, had made a vow to wear mourning until the death of their late prince

and leader should be avenged. His horse, his harness, his accoutrements and uniform, were all of the deepest black, and a horse-hair plume of the same sable hue floated above the plate of his schako, which was ornamented by a large silver skull and cross-bones, similar to the badge worn by our 17th Lancers. A death's-head was grinning on his sabretasche, on his holsters, his horse's forehead and breastplate, and the same grim badge looked out of every button on his coat. He was rather stately in figure for a German, and a tall and sombre-looking fellow, with large dark eyes, lank moustaches, and a solemn visage. His *tout ensemble* rendered him altogether as ghastly and melancholy a companion, as the most morbid or romantic mind could wish to ride with through a gloomy wood at midnight, with strange paths and darkness behind, and a battle-field in front.

After riding for about six miles in silence, a muttered ejaculation from both announced their observation of a flash which illuminated the sky. It was "the red artillery," and every instant other flashes shot vividly athwart the firmament, like sheet lightning; and soon afterwards the sound of firing was heard, but faint and distant. It was a dropping fire, and caused, probably, by some encounter of stragglers or outposts.

At day-break, on approaching the village of Waterloo, they met a horse and cart, driven along the road at a rapid trot by a country boor, clad in a

leathern cap and blue frock, having his shoes and garters adorned with gigantic rosettes of yellow and red tape. His car contained the bloody remains of the brave Duke of Brunswick, who at four in the evening had been mortally wounded, when heroically charging at the head of his cavalry in front of Les Quatre Bras. The hay-cart of a Flemish clod-pole was now his funeral bier. The bottom was covered with the red stream, forced by the rough motion of the car from the wound, which, being in the breast, was distinctly visible, and a heavy mass of coagulated blood was plastered around the starred bosom and laced lapels of the uniform coat. An escort of Black Brunswickers, sorrowing, sullen, and war-worn, surrounded it with their fixed bayonets. The boor cracked his whip and whistled to his horse, replacing his pipe philosophically, and apparently not caring a straw whether it was the corse of a chivalric prince or a bag of Dutch turf that his conveyance contained.

Ronald reined up his horse, and touched his bonnet in salute to the Brunswick escort; but the rage and sorrow of the cavalry officer, on beholding the lifeless body of his sovereign and leader, were such as his companion never beheld before. He muttered deep oaths and bitter execrations in German, and holding aloft his sabre, he swore that he would revenge him or perish. At least from his actions Stuart interpreted his language thus. He jerked his heavy sabre into its steel scabbard, and touching

his cap as a parting salute, drove spurs into his horse and, dashing along the forest pathway, disappeared. Ronald followed him for a little way, but finding that he was careering forward like a madman, abandoned the idea of attempting to overtake him.

Daylight was increasing rapidly, but he felt that dreamy and drowsy sensation which is always caused by want of sleep for an entire night. He endeavoured to shake off these feelings of weariness and oppression, for every thing around announced that he was approaching the arena of a deadly and terrible conflict. His heart beat louder and his pulses quickened as he advanced. Dense clouds of smoke, from the contest of the preceding evening, yet mingled with the morning mist, overhung the position of Quatre Bras, and, pressed down by the heavy atmosphere, rolled over the level surface of the country. At every step he found a dead or a dying man, and crowds of wounded stragglers, officers, rank-and-file, on horse and on foot, were pouring along in pain and misery to Brussels, bedewing every part of the road with the dark crimson which trickled from their undressed wounds. These were all sufferers in the fierce contest at Quatre Bras on the preceding evening. The village of Waterloo was deserted by its inhabitants, for, like a pestilence, war spread desolation with death in its path, and the fearful Flemings had fled, scared by the roar of the distant artillery.

The wounded were unable to give any account of the engagement, save that Brunswick was slain, and

the British had not yet lost the day. He was informed that his regiment was in the ninth brigade of infantry, commanded by Major-general Sir Dennis Pack; and that he would find them, with their kilted comrades the 42nd, and 44th English regiment, somewhere near the farm of Les Quatre Bras, bivouacked in a corn-field.

The speaker was an officer of the 1st regiment, or Royal Scots. He was severely wounded on the head and arm, and was making his way to Brussels on foot, bleeding and in great agony, as his scars had no other bandages than two hastily adjusted handkerchiefs. He leant for support on the arm of a soldier of the 44th, who was also suffering from a wound. The Royal Scot begged of Stuart to lend him a few shillings, adding that he had spent all his money at Brussels, and would be totally destitute when he returned thither, as he had not a farthing to procure even a mouthful of food.

Stuart gave him a few guineas, nearly all the loose change in his purse, but rendered a greater service in lending his horse, which could be of no further use to himself, as he was now close to the arena of operations. The officer mounted with many thanks, and promised to return the animal to the head-quarters of the Highlanders,—a promise which he did not live to fulfil; and the steed probably became the prey of some greedy boor of Soignies. By his accent he knew the officer to be his countryman, and he looked back for a short

time, watching him as his horse, led by the honest Yorkshireman of the 44th, threaded its way among the straggling crowd that covered the road.

There was an indescribable something in the face of this officer which seemed like part of a long forgotten dream, that some casual incident may suddenly call to remembrance. He surely had never seen him before, and yet his voice and features seemed like those of an old friend, and he felt well pleased with himself for the attention he had shown him. He inquired his name among the wounded soldiers of the Royals.

"He's Ensign Menteith of ours, sir," said one, saluting with the only hand that war had left him.

"We've many Menteiths," said another, who lay by the road-side. "Cluny is his Christian name, sir."

It was, then, his cousin, the son of Sir Colquhoun Menteith, that he had so singularly encountered and befriended. They had not met for eighteen years, since they were little children, and now beheld each other, for the last time, on the field of Waterloo. He was about to turn and make himself known, but Menteith had proceeded so far, that his figure was lost amid the crowd which accompanied him; but he hoped to meet him again,—a hope which was never realized, for he expired by the wayside, close to the entrance of the forest of Soignies. Feeling his heart saddened and softened by a thousand recollections of his childhood, which this inter-

view had awakened, Ronald turned his face towards Quatre Bras, taking a solitary path among some thickets, to avoid the disagreeable sights of human pain and misery which he encountered on every yard of the main road.

The morning was hazy, and every where dense clouds of vapour were curling upward from the earth, exhaled by the heat of the sun, which, as the day advanced, became intense, while the air was oppressive and sultry; but a great change came over the face of nature about twelve o'clock at noon.

While passing through the copsewood which bordered the highway beyond the village of Waterloo, Ronald heard the wail of a bagpipe, arising up from the woodlands, and wildly floating through the still air of the summer morning. He stopped and listened breathlessly, while the stirred blood within him mounted to his cheek. The last time he heard that instrument, it was awakening the echoes in the woods of Toulouse. But the strain was different now. It was played sadly and slowly, with all the feeling of which its wild reeds are capable; and the air was an ancient dirge from the Isle of the Mist—*Oran au Aiog*, or 'the Song of Death,' and Stuart's breast became filled with soft melancholy, and with wonder to hear this solemn measure of the Highland isles played in such a place, and at such a time. The cause was soon revealed.

On suddenly turning a point of the road, which was lined on each side by thick thorns and tall

poplars, he beheld Æneas or Angus Macvurich, a piper of the 92nd, stalking, with the slow and stately air peculiar to his profession, before a rudely-formed waggon, in which lay a wounded officer, over whom a cloak was cast to defend him from the fierce rays of the sun. Stuart, the assistant-surgeon, rode behind, and beside it came old Dugald Mhor Cameron, with his head bare and his silver tresses floating on the wind, while he hid his face in the end of his tartan plaid. A Highland soldier led by the bridle the horse which drew the vehicle,—a rough country car of the clumsiest construction, and a wretched jolting conveyance it must have been for a man enduring the agony of a complicated gunshot wound. Anxiety and woe were depicted in every face of the advancing group, and the Highlander who led the horse turned round every moment to look upon the sufferer in the car.

Ronald knew all the sad truth at once. On his meeting it, the cavalcade halted, the lament ceased, and a murmur of greeting arose from the Highlanders,—all except old Dugald, who stared at him with eyes of wonder and vacancy.

It was the colonel, brave Cameron, whom they were bearing away,—as many of his ancestors had been borne, from his last battle-field to his long home. He was not dead, but lay motionless on his back, pale and bloody, with his sword (rolled up in a plaid for a pillow) placed under his head. His eyes were closed, his cheeks were sunken and

ghastly, and the thick curls of his brown hair were dabbled with blood and soiled with clay. Notwithstanding his familiarity with scenes of blood, Ronald could not help shrinking on beholding the leader whom he loved so dearly, and whom so many brave men had followed, stretched thus helplessly, with the hand of the grim king upon him.

"Stuart, this is a sorrowful meeting," said Ronald in a low voice, as he pressed the hand of his old friend the *medico*. "Our good and gallant colonel—"

"Aich! ay,—the cornel—the cornel—the cornel," muttered Dugald in a whimpering voice. He seemed besotted with grief. "I kent, this time yesterday, that it was to happen ere the nicht fell. The lift was blue, and the sun was bricht; but a wreath descended on my auld een, and a red cloud was before me wherever I turned,—aboon me when I looked up, and below me when I looked doon; and I kent that death was near my heart, for the power of the *taisch* was upon me. Aich! ay! Lie you there, John Cameron? Few there were like you,—few indeed!" And the old man bowed down his wrinkled face between his bare knees, and wept bitterly.

"Poor Fassifern!" whispered the surgeon; "he will never draw sword again."

"Is he mortally wounded?" asked Ronald, in the same low tone.

"Yes. Ere noon he will have departed to a better place. But in this world he has been amply avenged."

This was spoken in a hasty whisper. The doctor's breast was too full of regret to have much room for astonishment at his suddenly meeting his brother-officer, but he inquired from whence he had now come.

"I have come on the spur from Ostend," answered Ronald, "outstripping many detachments on the march; for I have been very impatient to be with the old corps again. But this is sad news after my long absence. And what of the rest of the regiment? Have there been many casualties?"

"We have suffered severely,—lost nearly as many as at Alba de Tormes; but I know not the exact number. Return with me a few yards, and aid us in procuring a comfortable place for the colonel, and I will tell you all the regimental news in time. The corps is bivouacked in front of Les Quatre Bras, over yonder, and they will not likely get under arms for some hours yet. You can join, and report your arrival in the course of the day."

The sound of their voices caused Cameron to open his heavy eyes, and on beholding Ronald, a ray of their old fire sparkled in them. He stretched out his hand, and Ronald grasped it gently, but affectionately. Cameron attempted to speak, but his tongue failed in its office, and on his lips the half-formed words died away in faint mutterings.

As they entered the village of Waterloo, the surgeon related that, on the preceding evening, a battalion of the enemy had taken possession of a large two-storied house on the Charleroi road. From the windows and garden walls of this place they kept up an incessant fire of musketry on the British troops in its vicinity, until Lord Wellington ordered Fassifern, with his Highlanders, to dislodge them with the bayonet.

After a sharp contest, the place was taken by storm; but Cameron, while leading the assault, was shot through the body by a bullet from a barricaded window in the upper story, fired by a chasseur, who, however, ultimately gained nothing by the exploit. The eagle eye of Cameron's revengeful follower, Dugald Mhor, had marked the slayer; and when the house was entered, and the garrison were rushing from room to room and from passage to stair, combating for death and life, he dragged him from amid the bristling bayonets of his comrades, and twice plunged his long dirk into his bosom, sending it home, till the double-edged blade protruded through his goat-skin knapsack behind; and the Highlanders were so infuriated by the loss of their leader, that butt and bayonet were used freely, until scarcely a man was left alive in the place.

"Nae quarter! Remember the colonel! Death an' dule to every man o' them!" were cries with which they encouraged each other during the conflict.

The best house in Waterloo being selected, the colonel was borne into it, and placed in an apartment, which seemed to be a sort of parlour, facing the Brussels road. It was a snug little cottage, with walls of bright red brick, a thatched roof, and yellow door and shutters, with red panels. Numerous arbours and rails of trellis-work, painted green and white, encircled it; and a forest of tall hollyhocks, peonies, roses, and other large and glaring flowers were blooming about it, and glistening gaily in the meridian sun; while gorgeous tulips and anenomes were waving in thousands from plots and parterres, arrayed in all the summer glory of a Dutch garden. But these were miserably trod down, as the Highlanders bore the colonel up the narrow pebbled walk to the door, which being locked, was opened by the rough application of a stone from the highway. The inmates had fled, and the mansion was empty.

The colonel was laid upon the floor,—there was not a bed in the place, all the furniture having been carried off. His sorrowing old follower knelt down on his bare knees beside him, supporting his head, while he poured forth interjections and prayers in Gaelic.

"I can do nothing more for his wound; it is already dressed," whispered the surgeon to Ronald, who was eager to perform some office by which he might serve the invalid, or assuage some of his torments; but nothing could be done, and he was com-

pelled to stand, by an idle spectator, while the brave spirit of his friend hovered between life and eternity. "He is sinking fast," continued the doctor in the same whispering voice. "Alas! the regiment will never see his like again."

"Where is Angus Macvurich?" asked the colonel in a low voice, but a firm one, and as if all his energies were returning.

The piper answered by a loud snifter, or half-stifled sob.

"Oich! he's speakin' like himsel again. Ye'll no dee just this time,—will ye, no? O say ye'll no!" said old Dugald, bending over him in an agony of sorrow, and gazing on his face as a father would have done. "We'll baith gang hame,—ay, gang hame thegithir yet to Fassifern, among the green hills of the bonnie north country. Ochone! woe to the day we ever left it,—woe!"

"No, Dugald, my good, my dear old man; I shall never behold the fair Highland-hills again. My hour is come, and death is creeping into my heart, slowly but surely. Oh, that I might die among my kindred! It is a sad and desolate feeling to know that one must be buried in a distant land, and unheeding strangers will tread on the place of our repose. 'Tis sad to die here, and to find a grave so far away from home, from the land of the long yellow broom and the purple heather. Tell me, gentlemen, did my Highlanders storm the house on the Charleroi road?"

"Ay, please your honour," said the piper, "an' sticket every man they fand below the riggin o't."

"Those excepted who laid down their arms," added the surgeon. "But the house was gallantly stormed, colonel."

"Well done the Gaël! Well done, my good and brave soldiers!" cried the invalid.

There was a long pause, which nothing broke, save the loud breathing of the wounded Highlander, until, in feeble accents, he said,

"Come near me, Macvurich; I would hear the blast of the pipe once more ere I die. Play the ancient death-song of the Skye-men; my forefathers have often heard it without shrinking."

"*Oran au Aiog?*" said the piper, raising his drones.

The colonel moved his hand, and Macvurich began to screw the pipes and sound a prelude on the reeds, whose notes, even in this harsh and discordant way, caused the eyes of the Highlander to flash and glare, as it roused the fierce northern spirit in his bosom.

"He ordered that strange old tune to be played from the first moment I declared his wound to be mortal," said the surgeon in a low voice. "It is one of the saddest and wildest I ever heard."

"Hold me up, Dugald; I would say something," muttered Cameron. "Ah! Stuart—I mean Ronald Stuart, I have much to say and to ask you; but my voice fails me, and my tongue falters,—and—and—"

utterance failed him for a moment. "But tell me, gentlemen, what news from the front? Alas! I should have asked that before. But tell me, while I can hear your voices,—have the enemy been defeated?"

"They have been driven from the position at Les Quatre Bras," replied Doctor Stuart; "our troops are every where victorious."

"Then Cameron can die in happiness," said he firmly, as he sunk back. "Oh! I hope my dear country will think that I have served her faithfully!"*

His lips quivered as if twitched by a spasm, and he muttered some imaginary order to keep shoulder to shoulder, to prepare to charge; and, drooping his head upon the shoulder of Dugald Mhor, expired at about one o'clock in the afternoon.

A cry of agony, sharp and shrill, like that of a girl rather than of an old man of eighty, burst from the lips of Dugald, who bent his wrinkled and sun-burnt visage over the face of the colonel until he touched it; and he wept and sobbed bitterly, uttering uncouth ejaculations and saying strange things, such as only an aged Highlander (whose mind was filled with all the deep impressions of mountain manners and past ages) would have said.

Anon he drew himself up erect, cast his dis-

* These were his dying words. In recompense for his great services a baronetcy was granted to his family. In 1815 his aged father received the title of Sir Evan Cameron, Bart., of Fassifern.

ordered plaid about his towering figure, and gazed around him with eyes, in which there gleamed a strange light and unsettled expression. He seemed the very *beau ideal* of a Gaelic seer, and Macvurich, who imagined that he beheld some dark vision of the second sight, drew back with respect and awe, not unmingled with a slight degree of fear.

What wild vision crossed the disordered brain of the aged vassal I know not, but he tossed his arms towards it, and a torrent of blood gushed forth from his mouth and nostrils; he tottered towards the corse of Cameron, and sunk on the floor beside it, a dying man. Ronald sprang forward and lifted him up, but he never spoke again, and expired, making several ineffectual signs to Macvurich to play; but the piper was kneeling on the floor near the corse of his leader, and beheld them not.

Angus Macvurich was a stern old Highlander from Brae-Mar, browned with the sun of Egypt and the Peninsula. He had gained scars in Denmark, Holland, France, Spain, and Portugal. Since Cameron had joined the regiment as a young ensign they had served together, and he had seen blood enough shed to harden his heart; but now he was kneeling down near the dead body, covering his brown face with his hands, to conceal tears, of which, perhaps, he felt ashamed. The memory of days long passed away—of some old acts of kindness, or of his colonel's worth, were crowding thick and

full upon his mind, and the veteran was weeping like a girl.

Stuart was deeply moved with this scene of death and woe. Not having been in the action, his heart had not been roused, or its fibres strung to that pitch of callousness or excitement requisite to enable one to look coolly on such scenes. He shrouded the remains of Cameron in the ample plaid of his faithful and departed follower, and, after covering them decently but hastily up, he prepared to retire. Yet, ere he went, he returned again to lift the tartan screen, and

> "To gaze once more on that commanding clay,
> Which for the last, but not the first, time bled."

His breast became heated, and he felt strange vindictive longings for battle and revenge, such as are seldom felt until one has been engaged for at least half an hour. Desiring Macvurich to remain by the bodies until they could be prepared for interment, he quitted the cottage, and, accompanied by his namesake the surgeon, set out on the way to the bivouacks of the army.

Each was occupied with his own sad reflections on the scene they had just witnessed, and they walked forward for some time in silence. After awhile, Stuart recapitulated his adventures and the story of his disappearance, which afforded ample scope for conversation until they drew near Quatre Bras, when the miserable objects they encountered

at every step rendered it impossible to converse longer with ease or pleasure. The whole road was covered and blocked up with the unfortunate wounded travelling towards Brussels, some in the waggons of the Train, hundreds on foot, and hundreds crawling along the earth, covered with dust and blood, dragging their miserable bodies past like crushed worms; while their cries and ejaculations to God for mercy, and to man for aid and for water, formed a horrible medley, surpassing the power of description.

CHAPTER XI.

THE 17TH JUNE, 1815.

"Ardennes waves above them her green leaves,
Dewy with Nature's tear-drop as they pass,
Grieving—if aught inanimate e'er grieves—
Over the unreturning brave,—alas!
Ere evening to be trodden like the grass."

Byron.

"THAT is Quatre Bras," said the surgeon, pointing to a little village close at hand. "The Highlanders are in bivouac behind it;" and, adding that his services were now required in another direction, the military Esculapius rode off, while Ronald walked hastily forward to the village.

On nearing the spot where the regiment was in position, a strange-looking little hut, composed of turf and the boughs of trees, apparently hastily reared up by the wayside, attracted his attention. Curiosity prompted him to enter this wig-wam by pushing open the door, which consisted of nothing more than a large oaken branch, torn from the neighbouring forest. An officer clad in a blue surtout, white pantaloons, Hessian boots tasselled and spur-

red, and wearing around his neck a *white cravat* or neckcloth, started up from the examination of a large map of Flanders, over which he had been bending, and raising his cocked hat, bent his keen bright eye on the intruder with a stern and inquiring expression of anger and surprise. To use a Scotticism—Stuart was *dumbfoundered* to find that he had interrupted the cogitations and anxious deliberations of Wellington.

He muttered something—he knew not what—by way of apology, and withdrew as abruptly as he had entered, with the unpleasant consciousness that he must have looked very foolish.

On gaining the rear of the village, and approaching the Highlanders, he found them forming under arms, while the pipers, strutting to and fro on the highway, made all Quatre Bras and the Bois de Bossu ring to the 'gathering of the Gordons.' The regiment was formed in line behind a thick garden hedge, favoured by which he was enabled to advance close upon them unseen; and the astonishment of the officers and soldiers may be imagined, when, by leaping over the barrier, he appeared suddenly among them. A half stifled exclamation ran along the line, and there was a pause in the ceremonious formation of the parade.

The officers clustered round him, and many of the soldiers, pressing in with a forwardness which was easily forgiven, greeted him in their 'hamely Scots tongue,' but with an affection, joy, and earnestness

which he never forgot. Campbell, who now commanded the regiment, leaped from his horse, and with his ample hand grasped Stuart's so tightly as to give him some pain. One seldom shakes the hand of such a Celtic giant.

"Well, Ronald, my lad! this is astonishing—almost beyond belief. Do we look upon you, or your wraith?"

"Myself, major, myself I hope,—sound, wind and limb," answered Stuart laughing.

"I thought wraiths were not in fashion, in this flat country at least. Faith! this has quite the air of a romance, with the accompaniments of astonishment, mystery, and all that sort of thing. Did you come down from the clouds? or spring out of the earth like a Shetland dwarf?"

"Queer modes, both, of joining a regiment. No, major; I just leaped the hedge,—unromantically enough. But, how d'ye do, Chisholm? How are you, Macildhui? Ah! Douglas, my boy! and Lisle! Dear Louis, how much I have to ask and to tell! Your hand."

And thus he greeted them all in succession, from the pot-bellied field-officer to the slender ensign, raw from the college or nursery. A truly national shaking of hands ensued, and such, I may safely assert, as Quatre Bras had never witnessed before. Then came the light company, with their humble but hearty wishes of joy; and the whole regiment, giving martial discipline to the winds,

cheered and waved their bonnets, while the pipers blew as if their lives depended on it, until Wellington, confounded by the uproar which had so suddenly broken forth in his immediate vicinity, was seen looking from his wigwam in no pleasant mood; but not even the appearance of that portentous *white cravat,*—the glories of which are still sung by the Spanish muleteer, the Flemish boatman, and the Portuguese gipsy,—could still the clamour.

Although Ronald's letters written from London had informed his military friends of his existence and safe arrival in England, they were by no means prepared for his sudden appearance among them in Flanders, and he had to endure a thick cross-fire of questions and eager inquiries, which at that moment there was not time to answer; but he promised the rehearsal of his story at full length on the first opportunity, and for the present considerably repressed their joy by announcing the death of Cameron, and of his follower, poor old Dugald, who had been a man of no small dignity and importance among those who filled the ranks of the Gordon Highlanders.

The troops had been ordered to fall back upon the position of Waterloo, which was next day to be the scene of that "king-making victory,"—the most important ever fought and won in Europe, and one which has fixed for ever the fame of the great duke and the British army.

When the bustle created by his arrival had a

little subsided, Ronald requested a few words apart with Louis; but before he could speak, the voice of Campbell was heard in command.

"Fall in, gentlemen; fall in!"

"Alice?" whispered Stuart.

"She is well and happy, Ronald; and never once has her love wandered from *you*," said Louis, pressing his hand.

The bugle sounded, and they separated to join their respective companies; and next moment the adjutant was flying along the line at full gallop, to collect the reports. Then riding up to Campbell, he lowered the point of his sword, and, acquainting him with the casualties, returned to his post in the line, while the regiment broke into open column of sections, with the right in front; and the pioneers, with their saws, axes, &c., and their leather aprons strapped to their bare knees, went off double-quick in advance. "Quick march!" was now the order repeated by a hundred commanding officers, varying in cadence and distance. The trumpet brayed, the cymbal clashed, the drum rebounded, the war-pipe yelled forth its notes of defiance and pride, and the whole army was in motion *en route* for Waterloo.

By the suddenness of the order to "fall in," Stuart lost an opportunity (which never again occurred) of learning from Louis,—that of which he was still ignorant,—the wreck of his father's affairs, and his emigration to a strange country.

Gloom and doubt were apparent in the faces of both officers and privates, as the army began its march to the rear, upon Waterloo. Any thing like retreating is so unusual to British troops, that a chill seemed to have fallen on every heart as they moved from Quatre Bras, before which the third and fifth divisions were left to cover the rear,—or at least to deceive Napoleon by remaining in sight till the artillery and the main body of the army were far on the Waterloo road. As Lord Wellington had foreseen, Napoleon was long kept in ignorance of our retreat by this measure; but as soon as he perceived it, he despatched immense bodies of cavalry to press and harass the rear-guard. On looking back, just before the *Bois de Soignies* began to throw its foliage over the line of march, Stuart saw several dashing charges made by the British heavy dragoons, who rode right through and through the massive columns of the enemy, breaking their order, sabring them in hundreds, and compelling the rest to recoil, and repress the fierce feeling of triumph with which they beheld the British army retreating before them. Scarcely a shot was fired, as the carbines and pistols were rarely resorted to. Their conflicts were all maintained with the sword, and some thousand blades were seen flashing at once in the light of the sun, as they were whirled aloft like gleams of lightning, and descended like flashes of fire on the polished helmets of the

French, and on the tall and varied caps of the British cavalry.

During the greater part of this march, Ronald moved with a group of the officers about him, listening to that which he was heartily tired of relating,—"a full, true and particular history" of his detention among the Spaniards, his release and his restoration to the regiment. The men of the neighbouring sections, who were all listening attentively with eager ears, circulated the story through the ranks with various additions and alterations, to suit that taste for the marvellous and wonderful which exists so much among soldiers — Highlanders especially; so that by the time it had travelled along the line of march, from the mouths of the light company to the grenadiers at the head of the column, Ronald's narrative might have vied with that true history, the 'Life of Prince Arthur,' 'Jack the Giant Queller,' or any other hero of ancient times.

"Well, Stuart, my man!" said Campbell, riding up to Ronald; "I am happy to see you again at the head of the light bobs."

"I thank you, major; but truly none can rejoice more than myself," answered Ronald. "Faith! a century seems to have elapsed since I saw the old colours with the silver thistles and the sphinxes,—your favourite badge, major, waving above the blue bonnets. There was a time, when I thought never to have beheld them again."

"When you so narrowly escaped hanging by those rascally thieves, I suppose? Don Alvaro gave you ample reparation, so far as he could do, by drawing fifty human necks, like the thraws of so many muir-hens. A fine fellow, that Alvaro! only rather lank and sombre in visage. Faith! I shall never forget the supper his pretty sister gave us the first night we halted at Merida. Every dish had garlic, olive oil, and onions in it!"

"Hooch, deevils and warlocks!" said Sergeant Macrone, grasping the truncheon of his pike. "Oh! had I peen there peside you, sir, whan thae reiver loons spake o' a tow to you, many a sair croon wad hae peen among them!"

"I'm much obliged to you, Macrone; but, with a dozen of our blue bonnets, I would soon have made a clear house of them."

"Oich!" continued the sergeant, growing eloquent in his indignation, "it wad hae peen a fera tammed unpleasant thing to pe hanget, especially an officer and shentleman. But wad the reivers no hae shot yer honour, kindly and discreetly, just if ye had asked them as a favour, ye ken?"

"I never thought of that, Macrone," replied Ronald, laughing heartily; "both modes were equally unpleasant, though not equally honourable."

"Poor Cameron! and so we have lost him at last," observed Campbell, in a half-musing tone, while his eyes glistened. "I often look at the head of the column, and half imagine I see him riding

along there, on his tall black horse, as of old; his figure erect and stately, and his long feathers drooping down on his right shoulder. Many a day I have watched him with pleasure, as he led the line of march over the long plains of Spain, when we have been moving from sunrise to sunset, *on* the tall spire of some distant city. I shall obtain the command, but He who reads the human heart knows that I would rather have remained always major, that Cameron might have lived."

"Brave Fassifern! we were always proud of him, but more so now than ever," said Stuart, and his eyes glittered with enthusiasm while he spoke. "'Tis but two hours since I beheld him expire in Waterloo yonder."

"That d—ned old house near Quatre Bras!" exclaimed Campbell; "I am sorry we left one stone of it standing on another. Poor Fassifern fell at the head of the grenadiers, while assaulting it in front. I carried it in rear, beating down the back door with my own hand, and scarcely a man was left alive in it. Our men fought like furies after the colonel fell. Ay," he continued, emphatically, "John Cameron was a true Highland gentleman, and possessed the heart of a hero."

"Och!" muttered Macrone, "he was a pretty man, and a prave man, and nefer flinched in ta front o' the enemy."

"And never did one of his name, Duncan," whispered a comrade, in Gaelic. "I myself am a Cameron—"

"Ha, major! what is that?" asked Ronald, as something like a distant discharge of artillery sounded through the hot and still atmosphere. "Can the Prussians be at it again?"

"We shall hear no more of the Prussians, after what befell them at Ligny yesterday. 'Tis said that they have lost twenty thousand men; and old Blucher himself narrowly escaped being trodden to death by the French cavalry charging over him, as he lay unhorsed and wounded on the ground. They repassed him in retreat, but the old fox lay close. There is the sound again!"

"What the devil can it be?" said an officer.

"The French flying artillery must have come up with our rear guard."

"No, no, Ronald; look at the sky, man! We shall have a tremendous storm in five minutes."

While he spoke, the sky, which had been bright and sunny, became suddenly darkened by masses of murky clouds, the flying shadows of which were seen moving over the wide corn-fields and green woodlands. Scudding and gathering, these gloomy precursors of a storm came hurrying across the sky, until they closed over every part of it, obscuring the face of heaven, and rendering the earth dark as when viewed by the grey light of a winter day at three o'clock, and the spirits of the retreating soldiers became more saddened and depressed as the black shadows of the forest of Soignies deepened around them. Red, blue, and yellow streaks of lightning,

vivid and hot, flashed across the whole sky, lighting it up like a fiery dome from the eastern to the western horizon, and the stunning peals of thunder roared every instant as if to rend the world asunder. Rain and hail descended in torrents, while the tempests of wind, which arose in angry gusts, tore through the forest of Soignies like the spirit of destruction, scattering leaves, branches, trees, and the affrighted birds in every direction. Oh! the miseries of the 17th of June! The oldest soldiers in the army declared that the storm of that day surpassed any thing they had ever suffered or beheld.

The whole army, from the front to the rear-guard, were drenched to the skin. The roads, in some places, were flooded with water, till they looked like winding canals, with their surface broken into countless wrinkles by the splashing rain; in other places the mud was so deep, that the soldiers, loaded with their heavy accoutrements, sank above the ankles at every step, and the weight of the thick clay which adhered to their feet, added greatly to their misery. Hundreds of those in the Highland regiments lost their shoes on withdrawing their feet from the soil, and as no time was given to take others from their knapsacks, if they had any there, they were obliged to tread out the rest of the march in their red-striped hose. Many of the officers wore their thin-soled dress boots, their white kid gloves, &c., having been suddenly summoned to the field from the gaiety of the ball at Brussels, and some were almost bare-

footed before the order was given to halt. Their boots, of French kid, wore away like brown paper in the mud and rain.

Without tents or any covering, save their great-coats or cloaks, the troops passed the miserable night of the 17th June in bivouac,—exposed, unsheltered, to all the fury of the storm, which lasted until eight o'clock next morning. For nearly four-and-twenty hours the wind had blown and the rain fallen without intermission.

Though their spirits were considerably depressed, the officers and their soldiers bore all with that perfect patience and endurance, which the British army possesses in a greater degree than any other in Europe. They can bear stoically alike the fury of the elements, and the exasperating insults of a petulant mob.

Not a murmur of discontent was heard that night in the British bivouac; no man repined, as the utmost confidence and reliance were placed in the great leader, under whom, on the morrow, they were to engage in such a struggle as the world has rarely witnessed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE 18TH OF JUNE.

"And wild and high the Cameron's gathering rose!
The war-note of Lochiel, which Albyn's hills
Have heard—and heard, too, have her Saxon foes.
How in the noon of night that pibroch thrills,
Savage and shrill! But with the breath which fills
Their mountain pipe, so fill the mountaineers
With their fierce native daring, which instils
The stirring memory of a thousand years;
And Evan's, Donald's fame, rings in each clansman's ears."

Lord Byron.

About eight o'clock on the morning of the 18th the storm suddenly abated, the rain ceased, the wind died away, the grey clouds began to disperse, and the sun broke forth in his glory. His warm glow was delightful after the chill of such a tempestuous night; and the wan faces of the soldiers brightened as they watched the dispersion of the vapoury masses, and beheld the morning sky assuming a pure and serene blue. Alas! it was a morning sun which thousands were doomed never to behold setting at eve.

Immense masses of white mist were rising on all sides,—from the green woodlands of the Bois de

Soignies,—from the swamps, the fields, and the puddles formed in the night; and as the vapour became exhaled, and floated away to mingle with the clouds, the grass grew more green, and the fields of flattened corn rose, and waved their yellow harvest to and fro in the morning breeze. Fires were lighted by the soldiers, to dry their clothes and cook a ration of beef, which had been hastily supplied to some corps of the army. An allowance of grog was also served out by the commissariat to every man, without distinction. It was swallowed gladly and thankfully, and the former cheerfulness of the troops began to revive, and they became as merry as men could be who had marched so far, passed such a night, and had yet their shirts sticking to their backs.

This was the morning of the eventful 18th of June, 1815.

Sir Dennis Pack's brigade had scarcely finished their wretched meal of beef, broiled on bayonets and ramrods amid the smoky embers of green wood, before the pipers of the Royal Highlanders, who were bivouacked on the right, were heard blowing their regimental gathering with might and main, summoning the old *Black Watch* to battle.

"Stand to your arms! The enemy are coming on!" was the cry on every side; and aides-de-camp, majors of brigade, and other officers were seen galloping in every direction, clearing hedge and wall at the risk of their necks. The trumpets of the cavalry, the drums and bugles of the infantry, were

soon heard sounding in concert over every part of the position, as the army got under arms to meet their old hereditary foe.

"*Vive l'Empereur!*" A hundred thousand soldiers,—brave men as France ever sent forth, loaded the morning wind with the cry; and the hum of their voices, sounding from afar over the level country, was heard—like the low roar of a distant sea—murmuring and chafing, long before they came within range of musket shot.

The soldiers of the allied army stood to their arms with their usual willingness and alacrity, but with that degree of gravity and calmness which always pervades a body of men before an engagement. It is a serious reflection that one may be in eternity in five minutes, and one feels rather sedate in consequence,—till the blood is up, and the true British mettle fairly roused. A battle was about to be fought, and that it would be a bloody one was evident; for it was between two splendid armies, equal in arms, in discipline, and in courage, and led by two of the greatest generals the world ever produced. But it is not my intention to recount a history of the battle of Waterloo. Generally, I will confine myself to the motions of the 9th brigade, commanded by the brave Sir Dennis Pack.

It consisted of four regiments; namely, the third battalion of the 1st Royal Scots, the 42nd or Royal Highlanders, the 2nd battalion of the 44th or East Essex regiment, and the 92nd or Gordon High-

landers, with whom, I trust, the reader is tolerably well acquainted. The fighting at Quatre Bras on the 16th had considerably thinned their ranks, but they yet mustered five hundred bayonets.

Aides-de-camp, general and other staff-officers, were seen galloping on the spur over banks and ditches, through copse-wood and corn fields, bearing orders, instructions, and hasty despatches to those commanding corps and brigades; the cavalry looked to their girths and bridles, the infantry to their locks and pouches; the artillery-guns, tumbrils, and *caissons* were dragged at full gallop among ripe fields of wheat and barley, through hedges and slough ditches, with matches smoking, the gunners on the boxes, the drivers on the saddle, rammers and sponges rattling and clanking, and the cavalry escort galloping in front and rear. Bustle and noise, but with perfect steadiness and coolness, prevailed, as the army of Lord Wellington formed in position on that memorable field, and awaited the approach of their enemy, who came on flushed with the success of the recent battle of Ligny.

"There goes Buonaparte!" cried Ronald to his friend Louis Lisle, who at that moment came up to him.

"There goes Napoleon! the Emperor and all his staff!" burst from many a tongue.

The whole attention of the British line was attracted by the appearance of Buonaparte, who rode along the ridge occupied by the French army. He

wore his great-coat unbuttoned, and thrown back to display his epaulets and green uniform, and had on his head the little cocked hat by which all statues of him are so well known. A staff, brilliant and numerous, composed of officers wearing a hundred different uniforms, followed him, but at the distance of seventy or eighty paces, riding like a confused mob of cavalry. He passed rapidly along the French line towards La Belle Alliance; but the fire of a few twelve-pound field-pieces, which had been brought to bear upon his person, compelled him to retire to the rear.

The right of the allied army rested on Braine la Leude, the left on the farm of Ter la Haye, and the centre on Mont St. Jean, thus extending along a ridge from which the ground descended gently to a sort of vale; on the other side of which, at the distance of about twelve hundred yards from the allies, the long-extended lines of the French army were formed in battle array, with eagles glittering, colours waving, and bayonets gleaming above the dark battalions of infantry.

The celebrated château of Hougoumont was in front of the right centre of the allies; the woods, the orchard, and the house were full of troops. Arms glanced at every window, bayonets bristled everywhere around it, and the tall grenadier-caps of the Coldstream Guards, and the schakoes of the Belgians and Brunswickers, were visible above the green hedges of the garden, and the parapet walls which enclosed the park and orchard. The farm-

house of La Haye Sainte, on the Charleroi road at the foot of the eminence, had also been converted into a garrison, loop-holed and barricaded, with brass-muzzled field-pieces peeping through the honey-suckle and the rails of the garden around it.

All around the spot where these dire preparations had been made the land was in a beautiful state of cultivation, and the bright yellow corn waved ripe in every field; but the passage of cavalry, brigades of artillery, and sometimes dense masses of infantry in close column of companies or sub-divisions of five-and-twenty men abreast, the continual deploying on point and pivot as new alignements were taken up, made sad havoc among the hopes of the husbandman and farmer.

The Belgian and Hanoverian battalions were checkered as equally as possible with the British, and thus many different uniforms varied the long perspective of the allied line; while the French army presented one long array of dark uniforms, blue, green, or the grey great-coat, an upper garment worn almost invariably, in all weathers, by the French troops when on service.

Near a tree, which grew on a bank above the Charleroi road, and which formed, or denoted, the very centre of the British position, Lord Wellington could be seen sitting motionless on horseback, observing, with his acute and practised eye, the motions of his mighty antagonist. His cavalry were, generally, posted in rear of the right, the centre, and

left of the position, the artillery behind a hedge on a ridge which rises near Ter la Haye; and this screen of foliage concealed them from the enemy, who commenced the battle about half-past eleven o'clock.

A movement was seen taking place among the French, and in a few minutes the division commanded by Jerome Buonaparte attacked the château of Hougoumont. As they advanced upon it, Lord Wellington's artillery opened on them, and did considerable execution; but they pressed heedlessly on and assaulted the ancient château, which was resolutely defended, and soon became shrouded in a cloud of smoke as the volleying musketry blazed away from hedge and wall, barricade and window. Every bullet bore the fate of a human being; the French were strewed in heaps, and the château, into which they showered grape and musketry with unsparing diligence, seemed not likely to surrender soon. The foreign troops gave way, but the brave Guards maintained the defence of the house and garden *alone*, and with the unflinching determination and courage of British soldiers.

Under cover of a formidable cannonade, which Napoleon's artillery opened from the crest of the ridge where his line was formed, three dense masses of infantry, consisting each of four battalions, moving in solid squares, poured impetuously down on the left and centre of the allied line. They rent the air with cries of "*Vive la France! Vive l'Empereur!*" and on they came double-quick, with their sloped

arms glittering in the sun. They were enthusiastically encouraged by their officers, whose voices were heard above even the mingled din of the battle-cry, cheering them on as they waved their eagles and brandished their sabres aloft. One of these columns poured its strength on La Haye Sainte, where it experienced a warm and deadly welcome; while the other two attacked that part of the position which was occupied by Sir Dennis Pack's brigade.

As they advanced, Campbell made a signal with his sword, and the eight pipes of the regiment commenced the wild pibroch of Donald-dhu,—the march of the Islesmen to Lochaber in 1431. It was echoed back by the pipes of the Royals and 42nd on the right, and the well-known effect of that instrument was instantly visible in the flushing cheeks of the brigade. Its music never falls in vain on the ear of a Scotsman, for he alone can understand its wild melody and stirring associations. The ranks, which before had exhibited all that stillness and gravity which troops always observe—in fact, which their feelings compel them to observe—before being engaged, for fighting is a serious matter, became animated, and the soldiers began to cheer and handle their muskets long before the order was given to fire. A brigade of Belgians, formed in line before a hedge, was attacked furiously by the French columns, who were eager for vengeance on these troops, whom they considered as deserters from the cause of the "great Emperor," whose uniform they still wore.

The impetuosity of the attack compelled the Belgians to retire in rear of the hedge, over which they received and returned a spirited fire.

Pack's brigade now opened upon the foe, and the roar of cannon and musketry increased on every side as the battle became general along the extended parallel lines of the British and French. The fire of the latter on Pack's brigade was hot and rapid, for in numerical force they outnumbered them, many to one, and made dreadful havoc. The men were falling—to use the common phrase—in heaps, and the danger, smoke, uproar, and slaughter, with all the terrible concomitants of a great battle, increased on every side; the blood of the combatants grew hotter, and their national feelings of hatred and hostility, which previously had lain dormant, were now fully awakened, and increased apace with the slaughter around them. Many of the Highlanders seemed animated by a perfect fury,—a terrible eagerness to grapple with their antagonists. Captain Grant, an officer of the Gordon Highlanders, became so much excited, that he quitted the ranks, and rushing to the front, brandished his long broad sword aloft, and defied the enemy to charge or approach further. Then, calling upon the regiment to follow him, he threw up his bonnet, and flinging himself headlong on the bayonets of the enemy, was instantly slain. Poor fellow! he left a young wife at home to lament him, and his loss was much regretted by the regiment.

"This is hot work, Chisholm," said Ronald with a grim smile to his smart young sub, who came towards him jerking his head about in that nervous manner which the eternal whistling of musket shot will cause many a brave fellow to assume.

"Hot work,—devilish!" answered the other with a blunt carelessness which, perhaps, was half affected. "But I have something good to communicate."

"What?"

"Blucher, with forty thousand Prussians, is advancing from Wavre. Bony knows nothing of this, and the first news he hears of it will be the twelve-pounders of the Prussians administering a dose of cold iron to his left flank, upon the extremity of the ridge yonder."

"Good! but is the intelligence true?"

"Ay, true as Gospel. I heard an aide-de-camp, a rather excited but exquisite young fellow of the 7th Hussars, tell old Sir Dennis so this moment."

"Would to God we saw them!—the Prussians I mean. We are suffering dreadfully from the fire of these columns."

"Ay, faith!" replied the other, coolly adjusting his bonnet, which a ball had knocked awry, and turning towards the left flank of the company, before he had gone three paces, he was stretched prostrate on the turf.

He never stirred again. A ball had pierced his heart; and the bonnet, which a moment before he

had arranged so jauntily over his fair hair, rolled to the feet of Ronald Stuart.

"I kent he was *fey!* Puir young gentleman!" said a soldier.

"I will add a stone to his cairn," observed another, figuratively; "and give this to revenge him," he added, dropping upon his knee and firing among the smoke of the opposite line.

Stuart would have examined the body of his friend, to find if any spark of life yet lingered in it, but his attention was attracted by other matters.

The Belgians at the hedge gave way, after receiving and returning a most destructive fire for nearly an hour. The 3rd battalion of the Scots Royals, and a battalion of the 44th, (the same regiment which lately distinguished itself at Cabūl,) took up the ground of the vanquished men of *Gallia Belgica,* and after maintaining the same conflict against an overwhelming majority of numbers, and keeping staunch to their post till the unlucky hedge was piled breast high with killed and wounded, they were compelled also to retire, leaving it in possession of the enemy, who seized upon it with a fierce shout of triumph, as if it had been the fallen capital of a conquered country instead of the rural boundary of a field of rye.

It was now three o'clock in the afternoon. The strife had lasted incessantly for four hours, and no word was yet heard of the Prussians. For miles

around, the plains were involved in smoke; and whether they were approaching or not no man knew, for a thick war-cloud enshrouded the vale of Waterloo. Three thousand of the allies had been put to the rout, and the dense mob-like columns of the enemy came rolling on from the ridge opposite to Lord Wellington's position, apparently with the determination of bearing all before them.

When they gained possession of the hedge before mentioned, Sir Dennis Pack, who had been with its defenders till the moment they gave way, galloped at full speed up to the Gordon Highlanders,—a corps reduced now to a mere skeleton, and barely mustering two hundred efficient bayonets.

"Highlanders!" cried the general, who was evidently labouring under no ordinary degree of excitement and anxiety, "you must charge! Upon them with the bayonet or the heights are lost, for all the troops in your front have given way!"

"Highlandmen! shoulder to shoulder," cried Campbell, as the regiment began to advance with their muskets at the long trail, and in silence, with clenched teeth and bent brows, for their hearts were burning to avenge the fall of their comrades. "Shoulder to shoulder, lads! close together, like a wall!" continued the major, as, spurring his horse to the front, he waved his sword and bonnet aloft, and the corps moved down the hill. "Remember Egypt and Corunna,—and remember Cameron, though he's

gone, for his eye may be upon us yet at this very moment! Forward—double quick!"

The column they were about to charge presented a front, more than equal to their own, on *four* faces, and formed a dense mass of three thousand infantry. Heedless of their numbers, with that free and fearless impetuosity which they have ever displayed, and which has always been attended with the most signal success, the bonneted clansmen rushed on with the fury of a torrent from their native hills, equally regardless of the charged bayonets of the French front ranks, the murderous fire of the rear, and of ten pieces of cannon sent by Napoleon to assist in gaining the height occupied by Pack's shattered brigade.

It was a desperate crisis, and the regiment knew that they must be victorious or be annihilated.

A body of cuirassiers were coming on to the assistance of the vast mass of infantry,—all splendid troops, glittering in a panoply of brass and steel; and the slanting rays of the sun gleamed beautifully on their long lines of polished helms and corslets and the forest of swords, which they brandished aloft above the curls of eddying smoke, as they came sweeping over the level plain at full gallop. The advance of the little band of Highlanders made them seem like a few mice attacking a lion,—the very acme of madness or of courage. Their comrades were all defeated, themselves were threatened

by cavalry, galled by ten pieces of cannon, and opposed to three thousand infantry; and yet they went on with the heedless impetuosity of the heroes of Killiecrankie, Falkirk, and Gladsmuir.

The front rank of the enemy's column remained with their long muskets and bayonets at the charge, while the rear kept up a hot and destructive fire, in unison with the sweeping discharges from the field-pieces placed at a little distance on their flanks.

The moment was indeed a critical one to these two hundred eagle hearts. They were in the proportion of one man to fifteen; and notwithstanding this overwhelming majority, when the steady line of the Highlanders came rushing on, with their bayonets levelled before them, and had reached within a few yards of the enemy, the latter turned and fled! The huge mass, which might with ease have eaten them, broke away in a confusion almost laughable, the front ranks overthrowing the rear, and every man tossing away musket, knapsack, and accoutrements. The Highlanders still continued pressing forward with the charged bayonet, yet totally unable to comprehend what had stricken the foe with so disgraceful a panic.

"Halt!" cried Campbell. "Fire on the cowards! D—n them, give them a volley!" and a hasty fire was poured upon the confused mob.

A cry arose of "Here come the cavalry!"

"Hoigh! hurrah!" cried the Highlanders. "The

Greys—the Greys—the Scots Greys! Hoigh! our ain folk—hurrah!" And a tremendous cheer burst from the little band as they beheld, emerging from the wreaths of smoke, the squadrons of their countrymen, who came thundering over the corpse-strewed field, where drums, colours, arms, cannon and cannon-shot, killed and wounded men, covered every foot of ground.

The grey horses—"those beautiful grey horses," as the anxious Napoleon called them while watching this movement through his glass,—came on, snorting and prancing with dilated nostrils and eyes of fire, exhibiting all the pride of our superb dragoon chargers, while the long broad-swords and tall bear-skin caps of the riders were seen towering above the battle-clouds which rolled along the surface of the plain.

They formed part of the heavy brigade of the gallant Sir William Ponsonby, who, sabre in hand, led them on, with the First Royal English dragoons, and the Sixth, who came roaring tremendously, and shouting strange things in the deep brogue of merry "ould Ireland."

From the weight of the men, the mettle of their horses, and their fine equipment, a charge of British cavalry is a splendid sight; I say British, for our own are the finest-looking as well as the best troops in the world,—an assertion which few can dispute when we speak of Waterloo. Those who witnessed the charge of Ponsonby's brigade will never forget

it. The Highlanders halted, and the dragoons swept on past their flank, towards the confused masses of the enemy. The Greys, on passing the little band of their countrymen, sent up the well-known cry of "Scotland for ever!"

"Scotland for ever!" At such a moment this was indeed a cry that roused "the stirring memory of a thousand years." It touched a chord in every Scottish heart. It seemed like a voice from their home, from the tongues of those they had left behind, and served to stimulate them to fresh exertions in honour of the land of the rock and the eagle.

"Cheer, my blue bonnets!" cried Campbell, leaping in his saddle in perfect ecstasy. "Oh! the gallant fellows! how bravely they ride. God and victory be with them this day!"

"Scotland for ever!" echoed the Highlanders, as they waved their black plumage on the gale. The Royals, the 42nd, the Cameron Highlanders, and every Scots regiment within hearing took up the battle-cry and tossed it to the wind; and even the feeble voices of the wounded were added to the general shout while the chivalrous Greys plunged into the column of the enemy, sabring them in scores, and riding them down like a field of corn. The cries of the panic-stricken French were appalling; they were like the last despairing shrieks of drowning men, rather than the clamour of men-at-arms upon a battle-field. Colours, drums, arms, and every thing were abandoned in their eagerness to escape, and

even while retreating double quick, some failed not to shout *Vive l'Empereur! Vive la Gloire!* as vociferously as if they had been the victors instead of the vanquished.

An unlucky random shot struck Lisle's left arm, and fractured the bone just above the elbow. He uttered a sudden cry of anguish, and reeled backward several paces, but propped himself upon his sword. Ronald Stuart rushed towards him, but almost at the same moment a half-spent cannon shot (one of the last fired by the train sent to dislodge the ninth brigade) struck him on the left side, doubled him up like a cloak, and dashed him to the earth, where he lay totally deprived of sense and motion. When struck, a consciousness flashed upon his mind that his ribs were broken to pieces, and that he was dying; then the darkness of night seemed to descend on his eyes, and he felt as if his soul was passing away from his body. That feeling, which seemed the reverse of a terrible one, existed for a space of time scarcely divisible. There was a rushing sound in his ears, flashes of red fire seemed to go out from his eyes, and then every sensation of life left him for a time. The regiment thought him dead, as few escape a knock from a cannon-shot, and no one considered it worth while to go towards him, save Louis Lisle. All were too intently watching the flashing weapons of the cavalry as they charged again and again, each squadron wheeling to the right and left to allow the others to come up,

and the work of slaying and capturing proceeded in glorious style. Poor Ronald's loss was never thought of by his comrades.

"Stuart's knocked on the head, poor fellow!" was his only elegy. One life is valued less than a straw, when thousands are breathing their last on the awful arena of a battle-field.

Louis, whose left arm hung bleeding and motionless by his side, turned Ronald on his back with the right, and saw that he was pale and breathless. He placed his hand on the heart, but it was still. He felt no vibration.

"Great Heaven! what a blow this will be for my poor sister! Farewell, Ronald! I look upon your face for the last time!" He groaned deeply with mental and bodily agony as he bent his steps to the rear,—a long and perilous way, for shot of every size and sort were falling like hail around, whizzing and whistling through the air, or tearing the turf to pieces when they alighted. Hundreds of riderless horses, many of them greys, snorting and crying with pain or terror, were galloping madly about in every direction, trampling upon the bodies of the dead and the wounded, and finishing with their ponderous hoofs the work which many a bullet had begun.

The slaughter among the French at that part of the field was immense, but their case might have been very different had they stood firm and shown front, as British infantry would have done.

One thousand were literally sabred, ridden down, or cut to pieces, two thousand taken prisoners, with two eagles, one by a sergeant of the Greys, and all the drums and colours; a catastrophe which scarcely occupied five minutes' time, and which Napoleon beheld from his post near La Belle Alliance with sensations which may easily be conceived, for these troops were the flower of his numerous army.

This was about half-past four in the afternoon, and over the whole plain of Waterloo the battle was yet raging with as much fury as ever.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SISTER OF CHARITY.

"O woman! in our hours of ease
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
And variable as the shade
By the light quivering aspen made;
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou!"

Marmion.

When Ronald again became conscious that he was yet in the land of the living, he found himself in a waggon, the uneasy jolting of which occasioned him great agony. It was driven by two sturdy Flemish peasants, clad in blue *blouses* and red caps, as he could perceive by the light of the moon: they sang merrily some uncouth song, and appeared to be in a happy state of intoxication.

The Flemings were driving furiously, at a rate which threatened every moment to overturn the vehicle, and it was incessantly bumped against a wall on one side of the highway, or a high foot-path which bordered the other. Ronald often implored and commanded them to drive slower, but they heeded him no more than the wind. However, they

were compelled to slacken their speed on approaching Waterloo, where, in a short time, they were brought to a halt altogether, the road being completely choked up with the wounded,—thousands upon thousands of whom were on their way to Brussels on foot, a few on horseback, and many in waggons. It was now midnight, as the toll of a distant church clock announced. A horrible medley filled the air around the place where Stuart's waggon stopped. The cries of the wounded were piercing. In their agony, strong men were screaming like women, and the appeals for water from their parched tongues were piteous in the extreme. Some of them were men who had been wounded on the 16th at Quatre Bras, but hundreds of the sufferers who were maimed on that occasion, perished under the fury of the next day's storm in the forest of Soignies, whither they had fled for shelter on the temporary advance of Napoleon.

The highway was as much crowded as the field with dead and dying, and the waggons of the train, the baggage-carts, the commissariat caissons, &c., were every moment increasing in number, all pressing to get along the choked up road. The hubbub was increased by foreign and British cavalry, and mounted officers riding, some to the front and some to the rear, as their duty led them, and threatening to sabre any one who opposed their passage. Oaths, threats, and execrations, in English, French, Belgic, and German, resounded every where. It was a

medley of horror and confusion, such as few men have ever looked upon.

The boors who drove the waggon in which Stuart lay, abandoned it and left him to his fate. He was utterly heedless of what it might be. He had never felt so weary of life, when suffering under any disaster, as he did at that moment; and he sincerely envied the dead who lay around him. The pain of his bruised side was intense, and he would gladly have given mountains of gold, if he had them, for a single drop of water to moisten his parched and swollen tongue. His head felt hot and heavy, but there was no one near to raise it.

He sunk again into a stupor, and all that passed during the remainder of that dismal night seemed like a dream. He was still sensible of acute pain, but the jolting of the rumbling waggon, when again in motion, seemed like the motion of a ship at sea, and he thought himself once more in the Bay of Biscay, on board the Diana of London.

From his feverish slumber he was roused by feeling his forehead bathed with some cool and refreshing liquid, by hands soft and gentle, like those of a female; but this, too, he deemed imagination, and his eyes remained closed. But the bathing continued, and became too palpable to be mistaken. When he looked around, he found himself in an airy and elegant room, with white flowing drapery hanging gracefully from the windows, and from the roof

of the French couch upon which he lay. Instinctively he raised his hand to his neck, to feel for the portrait of Alice Lisle. It hung no longer there, but was placed in his hands by the kind fairy who had taken upon herself the office of being his nurse. He turned to look upon her, but she glided away.

"I am dreaming," murmured he, and closed his eyes; but on opening them again, the same scene met his view. The room was richly carpeted, the furniture was costly and elegant, the ceiling was lofty, and covered with painted birds and angels, flying among fleecy clouds and azure skies. The pictures on the wall were large Dutch cattle-pieces and glaring prints of Oudenarde and other battles, and a most agreeable perfume was wafted through the apartment from several Delft vases filled with fresh flowers, which adorned the polished side-tables and lofty marble mantel-piece. Ronald looked from one thing to another in silent wonder,—he could not imagine whither he had been conveyed; but that which most attracted his attention was the figure of a female,—a nun he supposed her to be,—whose face was turned from him, and who seemed to be kneeling in a meek and graceful attitude of prayer, so he had an opportunity of observing her particularly.

Her costume was very simple, but, from its shape, amply displayed her very beautiful bust and whole figure. It consisted of a tight body and wide skirt

of black serge, girt round her slender waist by a white fillet. She wore a hood of white silk, from beneath which one bright ringlet fell over her shoulder. There was something very bewitching and coquettish in that stray love-lock, and it gave fair promise that there was much more worth seeing under the same little hood. Her hands were very small, and very white; but they were clasped in prayer, and her face seemed to be turned upwards.

"Heavens!" thought Stuart, "I am back again in the land of guitars and pig-skins. This is witchcraft, and Waterloo is all a dream. Bah! my wound says no! Where am I?" said he aloud. "*Buenos dias, gentil señora,*" he added in his most bland Spanish.

"Ah, monsieur!" said the lady, springing towards him, "you have awakened at last."

"French, by Jove!" thought the invalid. "Napoleon has beaten us, and I am a prisoner."

"Ah! I have prayed for you very earnestly, and Heaven has heard me."

"What!" said Ronald in astonishment, "have you really been praying for *me?*"

"For *you*, monsieur," replied the young damsel, seating herself by his side.

"How very good of you, mademoiselle! But to what do I owe such happiness,—I mean, that you should take any interest in me?"

"Monsieur," said she pouting, "I pray for all,—the good Christian and the heretic alike."

Her face was very pretty, almost beautiful, indeed; rather pale, perhaps, but there was a girlishness, a pure innocence of expression in her soft dove-like hazel eyes, which made her extremely attractive. She seemed somewhere about sixteen,—a mature age on the Continent,—and had all the air of a lively French girl turned prematurely into a nun.

"I am extremely fortunate that you should interest yourself so much about me, mademoiselle," said Ronald in a tone sufficiently doleful, although he attempted to assume a gallant air. "But will you please to tell me where I am just now?"

"In Brussels, monsieur."

"Brussels? Good."

"See," continued the fair girl, drawing back the curtains; "there is the gay Sablon-square, and yonder the good old church of holy Saint Gudule, with its two huge towers and beautiful window."

"And this splendid house?"

"Belongs to the widow of Mynheer Vandergroot."

"And you, my pretty mademoiselle,—pray who are you?"

"You must not call me mademoiselle," said she demurely.

"What then?"

"Sister."

"Sister?"

"*Oui, monsieur.* I am called Sister Antoinette de la Misericorde."

"A strange name!"

"I think it very pretty, monsieur: I am called so among the *Sœurs de la Charité.* But never mind my name, monsieur; you speak too much, and disturb yourself. How glad I am to see you looking so well, after being in so deep a sleep all yesterday."

Ronald put his hand to his head, and strove to recollect himself.

"Was I not at Waterloo yesterday?"

"No, monsieur; the day before. Alas, what a day it was! But you must not speak any more, —and *must* obey me in all things. I am your nurse."

"*You!*" exclaimed Stuart in a tone of pleasure and surprise, while he attempted to take her hand; but she easily eluded him. "Ah, what a happiness for me, mademoiselle!"

"Sister!" said she, holding up her tiny finger. "I am your only nurse, and I have six other officers on my list. Poor creatures!" she added, while her fine eyes became suffused with tears. "Alas! they are dreadfully wounded, and I experience great horror in being their attendant, but my vows must be fulfilled. 'Tis the work of Heaven, and the poor Sister Antoinette must neither shrink nor repine. But your wound, monsieur; you were struck in the side, but there is no blood."

"But I am bruised to death, Antoinette."

"*Mon Dieu! mon ami;* so the medical officer said.

But here he comes, and I must be gone, for a time at least."

At that moment the door opened, and the assistant-surgeon entered. He made a profound bow to the lady,—imitating a style he had picked up in Castile, and causing the black plumage of his regimental bonnet to describe a circle in the air.

"Well, my dear Mademoiselle Antoinette," said he, taking her hand, "how is our patient this morning?"

"Indeed, monsieur, I know not," replied the girl with confusion, and attempting to withdraw her hand.

"I fear, Antoinette, if the troops are all provided with such nurses, they will be in no hurry to quit the sick list, which it is our interest to keep as empty as possible; but—"

Here mademoiselle broke away from him, and, snatching up a little basket of phials, fled from the apartment.

"Well, Ronald, my man," said the *medico*, unbuckling his broad-sword and seating himself by the bed; "how do you find yourself this morning?"

"Having ended your flirtation, 'tis time to ask, Dick," replied the invalid pettishly.

"What! are you turning jealous of a girl that nurses half the regiment? Let me see your knocks,—how are they?"

"Confoundedly sore! My ribs are all broken to pieces, I think."

"Scarcely," replied the doctor, passing his hand over the injured part; "they are all as sound as ever they were. Do you find *that* sore?" said he, deliberately poking his finger on particular places with the most medical *nonchalance.*

"The devil, Dick! to be sure I do," said Ronald, wincing, and suppressing a violent inclination to cry out, or punch the other's head.

"Sore, eh?"

"Very," said the other sulkily.

"Ah! I thought you would."

"I suppose you mean to follow up this attack, by prescribing bleeding and hot water?"

"The first, certainly; the last, as may be required," said Stuart, the doctor in his turn getting a little piqued.

"I have dozed away a whole day," said Ronald.

"You find yourself all the better for it now. We will have you on your legs next week."

"But the battle! You have kept up such a gabble, Dick, I have not had time to ask you if we won it."

"Who else could win it? But I will tell you all, after I have looked to your hurts."

"No; tell me first of the battle, and be as brief as possible."

"Well, then, Buonaparte was soundly beaten on the 18th, and is flying towards Paris, I believe. Wellington and old Blucher are after him, double quick."

"Our loss?"

"I have not heard."

"How is Lisle, and all the rest of ours?"

"I have not yet learned where Louis is billeted, but I fear his arm is lost. Captain Little was killed close by me, after you were struck. Fifteen officers are wounded, and eight killed; but you shall hear not another word till I have seen your wound more particularly, and have applied some dressing."

The cannon-shot had bruised his side severely. It was frightfully discoloured, and he was almost unable to move in consequence of the intense pain which he suffered.

The doctor, producing a silver case of lancets, proposed bleeding, a course to which Ronald stoutly objected, saying that he felt weak enough already. He was therefore fain to content himself with leaving directions for the preparation of an enormous poultice, and a diet of broth and barley-water. He then took his leave, saying that he had more than a hundred patients on his list, and should be totally unable to call for two days at least; but desired Allan Warristoun, Ronald's servant, to come every evening, and report how his master was. The doctor's prescription gave Ronald considerable relief, notwithstanding the throwing out of window of a considerable portion of the ingredients, and the discussion, with infinite relish, of certain delicacies which, after a few days, were brought to his bedside by the kind old widow Vandergroot.

Converting Warristoun's knapsack into a desk, Ronald sat, propped up in bed, writing a letter for Alice, and another for Lochisla, for he was still ignorant of the change which had taken place there, when Sister Antoinette, entering lightly and softly, stole to his side. Her gentle hand was on his shoulder, and her soft eyes were beaming on his, almost before he was aware of her presence. Her silken hood had fallen back, and revealed her fine glossy hair,—all, save the long stray ringlet, beautifully braided like a coronet around her head. Her order were not robbed of their flowing tresses on taking their vow upon them.

Ronald tossed the knapsack upon the carpet, and caught her hand with an exclamation of pleasure. She permitted him to retain his hold for a moment. He would have spoken, but she placed her finger on his lips, and again told him that she was his nurse, and that he "must not speak." The finger belonged to a very pretty hand, though it was unadorned by ring or bracelet; and, taking it again within his own, he ventured to kiss it. The sister drew back instantly, and blushed crimson; but not with displeasure, for she seemed too amiable and gentle a creature to be easily offended.

"I have brought you three books, monsieur."

"A thousand thanks, my dear little sister!" said he, as she produced the volumes from a small reticule, which she carried under the skirt of her long

cape. "How very attentive of you! I am always so dull when you are absent."

"I had them, monsieur, from an aged *Reposante* of our order, who in time has amassed quite a little library of her own."

"A French Bible," said Ronald, laying aside the first with an air of disappointment. "What next? 'The holy Doings of the good Sisters of St. Martha.' And the next? 'Rules of the *Servantes des Pauvres de Charité!*' By Jove! my dear Antoinette, these books won't do for me, I fear."

"They are very good books, monsieur," said she modestly. "I am sorry you are displeased."

"*Ma belle Antoinette,* I thank you not the less, believe me; but if any of my brother-officers were to pop in and find me reading them, I should never hear the end of it, and two or three duels would scarcely keep the mess in order."

"I am sorry for it. But if you will not read them yourself, I will; and if any of your wild Scottish officers come in, let them laugh at me if they dare."

"They will take care how they do that in my chamber, Antoinette," said Stuart with a peculiar smile, while the girl threw back her hood and prepared to read, displaying, as she did so, a neck and hands of perfect beauty and lady-like whiteness. She read, in a low, earnest, and very pleasing voice, the story of the good Samaritan, to which Ronald, who was quite enraptured with her appearance and

manner, paid very little attention. She read on without ceasing for nearly half an hour, and imagined that the young officer was a very attentive listener. But, in truth, he was too much occupied in observing the admirable contour of her face, her downcast lashes and fine hair, the motion of her little cherry lips and swelling bosom, to attend to the various chapters which she was so good-natured as to select for his edification.

After administering certain drugs, which perhaps neither Widow Vandergroot nor Doctor Stuart, with all their eloquence, could have prevailed on Ronald to swallow, she withdrew, notwithstanding his entreaties that she would remain a little longer.

He felt rather jealous of the attentions she might bestow on others; but this selfish feeling lasted only for awhile. She had several Highlanders, three hussars, and two artillery officers on her list: some of the latter were minus legs and arms. Next day when she visited Stuart she was weeping, for three of her patients had died of their wounds.

The whole of Brussels had been converted into a vast hospital: every house, without distinction, was crowded with wounded and sick. The officers and soldiers, in some places, were lying side by side on the same floor; and the humanity, kindness, and solicitude displayed towards these unfortunates by the ladies, and other females of every class, are worthy of the highest praise. They were to be seen hourly in the hospitals, distributing cordials and

other little comforts to the wounded soldiers of all nations,—friend and foe alike. They were blessed on every side as they moved along, for the poor fellows found sisters and mothers in them all.

Ronald took a deep and, perhaps for so young a man, a dangerous interest in the fair Antoinette de la Misericorde. He deplored that so charming a creature should be condemned to dwell in a dreary cloister,—her fine features shaded and lost beneath the hideous lawn veil and mis-shapen hood of the sisters; and that her existence was doomed to be one of everlasting prayer, penance, fast, humiliation, and slavery in hospitals, surrounded continually by the fetid breath of the sick, by distempers and epidemics, scenes of want, woe, and misery, and in the hearing sometimes of sorrow, blasphemy, and horrid imprecations,—for her duty led her into the dens and prisons of the police, and the inmost recesses of the infamous *Rasp-haus*. Whether her own wish, or her parents' tyranny and superstition, had consigned her to this miserable profession, he never discovered; but the life of a galley-slave or a London sempstress would have been preferable.

Antoinette was evidently a lady by manner, appearance, and birth. None but a lady could have owned so beautiful a hand. She had all the natural vivacity and buoyant spirits of a French girl, and, at times, her sallies and clear ringing laughter contrasted oddly with the sombre garb and her half real, half affected demureness.

Ronald formed a hundred plans for her emancipation, but always rejected them as impracticable. To persuade her to elope from Brussels, and go home with him to be a companion for Alice Lisle, would never do. Scandal would be busy, and even should he escape the wrath of the Belgian police, the *mess* would quiz him out of the service.

"What the deuce can be done to save this fair creature from such slavery?" thought he. "I would to Heaven somebody would run away with her! There's Macildhui of ours, and Dick Stuart, our senior Esculapius, handsome fellows both, and both quite well aware of it. Who knows what may come about? The medico is evidently smitten with her, and Macildhui is on her sick list. Since poor Grant was knocked on the head, we have not a married man, except Louis, among us, and Antoinette would be an honour to the regiment."

The combined attention of the interesting little *fille de couvent*, of the widow, of Doctor Stuart, and of Allan his servant, soon placed Ronald on his feet again; and in the course of a week or two he was able to move about the room, and enjoy a cup of chocolate at the window overlooking the square, where a host of crippled soldiers, leaning on sticks and crutches, were seen hobbling about among fresh-coloured Flemish girls with plump figures and large white caps, bulbous-shaped citizens, and pipe-smoking Dutchmen in high-crowned hats and mighty inexpressibles.

Two days after he became convalescent, the sister informed him that now her visits must cease.

"And will you not come to me sometimes, Antoinette?"

"I am sorry, monsieur; no, I cannot."

"Then I will visit you."

"That must not be either: a man never passes our threshold. I must bid you farewell."

"Ah, you do not mean to be so cruel, Antoinette?"

"There is no cruelty," said she, pouting; "but I mean what I say."

"Our acquaintance must not cease, however," said Ronald, taking her hand and seating her beside him near the window which overlooked the bustling *Rue Haute.* "Must we never see each other more, and only because there are no more confounded drugs to be swallowed and pillows to be smoothed?"

"It must be so, my friend; and I—I hope you have been satisfied with me."

"Antoinette! satisfied? and with *you?* Ah! how can you speak so coldly? My dear little girl, you know not the deep interest I take in you. But, tell me, would you wish to leave Brussels? It cannot be your native place."

"Monsieur, I do not understand—"

"Would not you wish to leave the dull convent of the sisterhood to live in the midst of the gay and the great world,—to live in a barrack, perhaps, and be awakened every morning by the merry reveillé or the bold pibroch, or to—"

He paused, for the last observation had been misunderstood. The eyes of the French girl flashed fire, and her pouting lips curled so haughtily and so prettily, that, yielding only to the impulse of the moment, Ronald was tempted to carry on the war with greater vigour.

"Pardon me, Antoinette; I did not mean to offend you," said Stuart, drawing her nearer to him by the little unresisting hand which he still held captive.

"O monsieur! what do you mean?" cried the poor girl, trembling violently, while a deep blush covered her whole face and neck; her sparkling eyes were cast languidly down, and the palpitations of her heart could be distinctly seen beneath the tight serge vest or boddice which encased her noble bust. "*Oh, mon Dieu!*" she added, "what is the matter with me? I feel very ill and giddy." Yet she made but feeble struggles to release herself.

"Promise you will come again and see me, Antoinette," said Ronald, drawing her very decidedly on his knee.

"Oh, let me go, monsieur. I must have the honour to wish you a good morning." She made a motion to go, but his arm had encircled her. "My vows! Oh, pray, for the love of Heaven, let me go. Unhand me, I implore you!"

"One kiss, then, Antoinette,—only one kiss; and in sisterly love, you know?" and his lips were pressed to her hot cheek ere she was aware. "But one more, dear Antoinette!" but she burst from

his grasp and covered her burning face with her robe, weeping as if her heart would break.

"Holy Virgin, look down upon me!" she exclaimed. "How shall I ever atone for this deadly sin? I *must* confess it, and to the stern dean of Saint Gudule, that the lips of a man have touched mine. Me! a Sister of Charity, a nun, a miserable woman, sworn and devoted to the service of Heaven! Oh, monsieur, you have done me a great wrong; but may Heaven forgive you as readily as *I* do! Adieu! we shall never meet again."

Ronald made an attempt to catch her, but nimbly and gracefully as a fawn she eluded his grasp, and fled down stairs like an arrow, leaving the discomfited soldado more charmed than ever with her simplicity and modesty. And it may easily be supposed that the interest she had excited in his bosom was increased when he discovered that, in spite of her vows and veil of lawn, he was not indifferent to the little French nun.

"Still," he reflected, "it is better that we should meet no more. Antoinette is wise: yet I hope she may look up here to-morrow, if it's only to see me for the last time."

To-morrow came and passed away, but the Sister of Charity came not to visit him as usual, and he regretted that he had frightened her away. "However," thought he, "she may yet come to-morrow: the little fairy loves me better than she dares to acknowledge."

Three days elapsed without her visiting him, and it was evident that she would come no more. He grew very impatient and uneasy, and spent most of his time in watching alternately the square and the Rue Haute, with the hope of seeing her pass. Once he saw a Sister of Charity coming from the church of Saint Gudule. Her figure seemed light and graceful as she tripped down the immense flight of steps at the entrance: it was Antoinette, without doubt. Regardless of distance and the crowded street below, Ronald called aloud to her; but she was too far off to hear, and turned a corner down the Rue de Shaerbeck without bestowing one glance on the mansion of widow Vandergroot, which was sufficiently conspicuous by its large yellow gables, its green Venetian blinds, and red streaks round the windows. If the little figure which glided along the street were Antoinette's, he never beheld it again.

One day, about a fortnight afterwards, while seated reading a despatch of Wellington's, he heard footsteps, much lighter than those of the substantial widow Vandergroot, ascending the wooden staircase. "She has come at last," said he, as the cigar fell from his mouth: he threw down the paper, and half rose. The door opened, and Lisle entered.

"Louis!" he exclaimed, leaping up with astonishment. "Gracious powers! how changed you are."

"I may observe the same of you! Faith, man! you are wasted to a mummy," replied Lisle, smiling sadly. "I have been winged at last," he added,

pointing to his left sleeve, which was empty, and hung, attached by a loop, to a button at his breast. "It is now doing very well," he continued, "but the sight of my empty sleeve and stump will scare the ladies at Inchavon: *that,* though, is the least part of the affair. My soldiering is now ended: the Gordon Highlanders and Louis Lisle must part at last! 'Every bullet'—you know the adage."

"I am glad you bear with your loss so easily."

"Your own escape was a narrow one."

"Very. Had I been a few yards nearer the ridge, where the enemy's guns were in position, that unlucky twelve-pound shot would have cut me into halves like a fishing-rod. But how are all the rest of ours? I have not been abroad yet."

"All doing famously, and ready to swear that the ladies of Brussels are angels upon earth,—the Sisters of Charity especially." This was said unwittingly, but Stuart felt the blood mounting to his temples. "As yet there have been no more amputations, but Macildhui is in a worse predicament than any of us."

"How, pray?"

"He has been deeply smitten with the charms of a certain little French Sister of Charity, by whom he has been, luckily or unluckily, nursed; but his romantic ladye-love has deserted him, without warning, for the last few days, and poor Mac is very sorrowful, sentimental, and all that. He poured all his sorrows in my ear one evening, being thrown

completely off his guard by the mellow influence of a glass of *vin ordinaire* at sixteen sous per bottle. But the Sister—"

"Never mind her," said Ronald, colouring very perceptibly again; "tell me about the army. What's the news from head-quarters?"

"Oh, glorious! the power of France and of Buonaparte has been completely laid prostrate. The army pressed forward into the enemy's country; and Marshal Davoust sent the Marquis of Wellington a flag of truce, craving a suspension of hostilities, and offering to yield up Paris. It was surrendered on the 4th of this month (July), and the marshal commenced his retreat beyond the Loire. Our troops are all in Paris by this time; so make haste and get well, my dear fellow, that you may rejoin. Only think how the rogues will be enjoying themselves in Paris!"

"There are few of ours left to rejoice."

"About one hundred and fifty bayonets are with Campbell, and we have nearly five hundred wounded here in Brussels. That cursed affair at Quatre Bras mauled us sadly. Before the engagement, we marched out of Brussels exactly one thousand and ten strong, and more than one-half lay on the sod ere sunset. Poor Cameron! the corps will feel his loss. By-the-by, I forgot to mention that Campbell has got the lieutenant-colonelcy. Our romantic friend Macildhui gets the majority, and you are now senior

captain. I hope you will win your spurs ere I see you again. I set out for Scotland to-morrow."

"So soon?"

"Yes. My letters from Virginia and Alice are very importunate; and I shall either sell, or go upon half-pay. I leave Flanders on sick leave, in the first instance."

"Well, I shall soon rejoin you in Perthshire. I have seen enough blood shed and battles won, and long to see the old peak of Benmore, and hear the leaves rustling pleasantly in the woods of Oich and Lochisla again."

Next day Lisle took his departure from Brussels. He still singularly left Ronald in ignorance of what had occurred at home. A thousand times he was on the point of adverting to the subject, but always refrained. In a letter to Alice, he said that he would leave to *her* "the disagreeable task of conveying to Stuart the information of his father's ruin, and the emigration of the Lochisla men; because," continued the letter, "so great is Ronald's veneration for his parent, and such his Highland pride and his love of the old ancestral tower, with all its feudal and family associations, that I verily believe he would shoot himself in the first gust of his passion, were I to acquaint him with what has happened at Lochisla."

Scarcely had Lisle left Brussels, when Ronald found that his thoughts were beginning to revert to

Antoinette de la Misericorde; and longing to see her again, he determined to sally forth the next day and take an airing, in the hope of meeting her in the streets. There were many hobbling about in the sunshine, on the Boulevard de l'Este and the Boulevard du Nord, who had been more severely wounded than himself.

On the morrow, therefore, immediately after discussing his breakfast,—chocolate and a cigar,—he went forth into the streets of Brussels for the first time since he passed through them in a waggon. The noise, whirl, and din of the passengers and vehicles of every kind, caused such a spinning sensation in his head, that he nearly fell to the ground. He moved along the crowded streets, scarcely knowing whether his head or heels were uppermost. The glare of the noon-day sun seemed hot and strange, and every thing—the houses, the lamp-posts, the church spires, seemed waving and in motion. With the aid of a patriarchal staff, which erst belonged to Mynheer Vandergroot, he made his way through Brussels, and reached the long shady walk of the Boulevard de l'Este, where, in thankfulness, he seated himself for some minutes on a stone sofa.

The convent of the Sisters of Charity bordered somewhere on the Boulevard. He had been directed thither, not by verbal instructions, but by signs, of which every Fleming seems to be a professor, as it saves the mighty labour of using his tongue. Each

mynheer whom he accosted, being too lazy to use his mouth, generally replied by pointing with his long pipe, or by jerking the summit of his steeple-crowned hat in the direction inquired for.

The streets were thickly crowded with military convalescents, of every rank and of many nations. The regimentals were numerous. The English, the Prussian, the Highland, the Belgian, and the Hanoverian, were creeping about every where, supporting themselves on sticks and crutches; and in the sunny public areas, long ranks of them might be seen basking on the ground, or propped against the wall on stilts and wooden legs, yet all laughing and smoking, as merrily as crickets.

After a great deal of trouble, Ronald discovered the convent of the Sisters of Charity, somewhere near the end of the Boulevard, at the corner of the Rue aux Laines. It was a huge, desolate-looking building, and might very well have passed for the military prison, which is not far from it. Its windows were small,—grated and far between; and the whole place looked not the less sombre because the morning sun shone cheerily on its masses of grey wall, lighting up some projections vividly, and throwing others into the deepest shadow. He heard a bell tolling sadly somewhere close by, and a strain of choral voices mingled with its iron tones. It rung a *knell,* and a dismal foreboding fell upon Stuart as he listened. He struck gently with the gigantic knocker

which ornamented the iron-studded gate, and immediately a panel was pulled aside, and the grim wrinkled visage of the *portière* appeared within. He solicited admittance.

"No man can ever pass this threshold, monsieur," replied the other, who was a little woman of French Flanders, and clad in the garb of the order.

"How is the sister Antoinette de la Misericorde?"

"Well,—I hope."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Ronald. "But can I not see her, Mademoiselle?"

"Oh, monsieur! that is impossible," replied the portière sadly. "When I tell you she is gone to—"

"To where, Mademoiselle?"

"Heaven!" replied the little woman tartly; and being offended probably at Ronald's impetuosity, she closed the panel in his face without ceremony.

The fragile and delicate creature,—how utterly unsuited for the life to which she had been doomed —had fallen a victim to the vile and stupid superstition that had consigned her to a Convent. While attending, in her mild and gentle innocency, on the sick in one of the military hospitals, she had been attacked with a violent fever that raged there, and wasted quickly away under its fiery power.

Stuart reeled against the iron-studded door as the words of the portière fell upon his ear, for at that moment he felt sick at heart, and his knees tottered with weakness; but he walked away as quickly as he could, till the requiem of the sisterhood and the iron

clang of the bell could no longer be heard amidst the bustle of the Rue aux Laines.

"Poor Antoinette!" thought he, as he turned down the Rue Royale and, skirting the famous park, made straight for his billet—"fair and gentle as she was, she deserved a better fate than to perish in such a den of gloomy superstition and of blind devotion."

The poor girl's death made him very sad for some days; but the impression which her beauty and artlessness had made upon him wore away as he grew better, and became able to frequent the *cafés*, the park, the Rue Bellevue, and other public places of resort at Brussels. There the important events following the great victory at Waterloo,—the capture of Paris, the public entry of Louis XVIII., the flight of Buonaparte, and his surrender to Captain Maitland of the Bellerophon, were all canvassed fully and freely, amidst the boasts of the Belgians about the wonders performed by their countrymen on the glorious 18th of June!

After residing in Brussels about two months, Stuart reported himself "well," and was appointed to take command of three hundred convalescents, who were declared fit for service by a medical board, and were to rejoin the Highlanders at Paris "forthwith."

Early on the morning of his departure, just as Ronald was getting on his harness, a man who brought the widow's letters from the *Hôtel des Postes*, placed in his hand one addressed to him-

self. He tore it open: it was from Lisle, dated "Edinburgh," and ran thus:—

"Dear Stuart,

I have merely written a short note to announce my arrival in Scotland, and that all are well at Inchavon. Your uncle, old Sir Colquhoun Monteith of Cairntowis, has taken his departure to a better world; and, as we cannot regret his death, allow me to congratulate you on becoming possessed of seven thousand a-year, with one of the finest estates in Scotland for shooting and coursing. Messrs. Diddle and Fleece, W. S., Edinr., will send you further intelligence. I have since seen, by the Gazette, that Cluny Monteith, your cousin, died of his wound somewhere on the Brussels road.

Yours, &c."

CHAPTER XIV.

FRANCE.

"These six years past I have been used to stir
When the reveille rung; and that, believe me,
Chooses the hours for rousing me at random,
And having giving its summons, yields no license
To indulge a second slumber."

Auchindrane.

It was on the morning of the 16th September that Ronald quitted Brussels, having under his command three hundred rank and file of the Gordon Highlanders, as many more of the 42nd, and fifty men of the Coldstream Guards. Three other officers were with him, but he was their senior both by rank and standing. They paraded in the park before the king's palace, in heavy marching order, about six o'clock in the morning, and, moving round the corner of the palace of the Prince of Orange, they proceeded along the Boulevard, after passing through the Namur gate. As they quitted the city, with bayonets fixed and pipes playing before the fifty Coldstreams, who of course marched in front, they elicited shouts of applause from the Belgians, many

of whom followed them for many miles on the Waterloo road, and several young women went much farther, so that they never returned at all. Stuart had a very affectionate leave-taking with Widow Vandergroot, whose fat oily face was bedewed with tears at his departure.

Their route, for part of the way, lay through the forest of Soignies; on quitting which, they entered the plains of Waterloo, so lately the scene of that fierce contest in which the greatest empire in Europe had been lost and won. They were now treading on the hallowed ground of the field, and the murmur of conversation, which had arisen among the detachment the moment command to "march at ease" had been given, now died away, and the soldiers trod on in silence, or spoke to each other only at intervals, and in whispers, for there was something in the appearance of the vast grave-yard around them which caused strange feelings of sadness to damp the military pride that burned in every breast.

The morning was remarkably fine, with a pure air and almost cloudless sky. All nature looked bright and beautiful, and the rising sun cast the long shadows of every house and tree far across the level landscape, where every thing was beginning to assume a warm autumnal tint.

The farm of La Haye Sainte, the fine old château of Hougoumont, and other houses, were all roofless and ruined, the walls breached and battered by cannon-shot, the parterres, the shrubberies, and orchards

destroyed; but on these wrecks of the strife they scarcely bestowed a look. As they marched over the ridge where the British infantry formed line, the sights which greeted them there caused the Highlanders—naturally thoughtful at all times—to become more so.

"No display of carnage, violence, and devastation could have had so pathetic an effect as the quiet orderly look of its fields, brightened with the sunshine, but thickly strewed with little heaps of upturned earth, which no *sunshine could brighten.* On these the eye instantly fell; and the heart, having but a slight call made upon it from without, pronounced with more solemnity the dreadful thing that lay below, scarcely covered with a sprinkling of mould. In some spots they lay thick in clusters and long ranks: in others, one would present itself alone; betwixt these, a black scathed circle told that fire had been employed to consume, as worthless refuse, what parents cherished, friends esteemed, and women loved. The summer wind, that shook the branches of the trees and waved the clover and gaudy heads of the thistles, brought along with it a foul stench, still more hideous to the mind than to the offended sense. The foot that startled the small bird from its nest among the grass, disturbed at the same time some poor remnant of a human being,—either a bit of the showy habiliments in which he took pride, or of the warlike accoutrements which were his glory, or of the

framework of his body itself, which he felt as comeliness and strength the instant before it became a mass of senseless matter."

The ideas which appear to have pervaded the mind of the writer quoted, were those of every man of that detachment; such, indeed, as the objects in their path, and the mournful scenes by which they were surrounded, could scarcely fail to inspire.

Marching by easy stages, they entered Mons, the strongly-fortified capital of Hainault. During the halt of two days here, most of the officers one evening attended the theatre, a visit which nearly cost some of them their lives. The play was "The Fall of Zutphen," and the dresses of the actors were as ridiculous as their acting. The ferocious Duke of Alba was represented by a little fat Fleming, clad in a cocked hat and old red coat; Frederick, his son, by a boor, *en blouse*, who smoked a pipe composedly during the performance. The Dutch troops were represented by a party of Belgian chasseurs, and the Spanish by a strong brigade of motley-garbed scene-shifters and candle-snuffers. At a part of the play where Frederick storms Zutphen, and orders his soldiers to give it to the flames, sparing neither sex nor age in the sack, some ashes dropped from the bowl of this ferocious commander's pipe, and, lighting among some sulphur and other ingredients kept for stage purposes, set the whole scenery in a blaze. Zutphen was in flames in earnest. The players rushed about in every direction, crying for help like

distracted people; but the audience, supposing the conflagration to be a part of the play, applauded with increasing vehemence, till the flames of Zutphen began to extend from the stage to the other parts of the house, and the blazing wood tumbling about their ears, warned the Flemings of their danger. A tremendous rush was made for the door. Stuart was thrown over by the press, and trod under their feet; and had not the officer who commanded a party of the Coldstream Guards menaced the citizens with his sword and rescued him, my narrative would probably have ended here. He dragged him out from the crowd, and they gained the street in safety.

The next stage was Bavay, in France. It is a little, but very ancient town of French Hainault; and the inhabitants, either actuated by loyalty to Louis XVIII., or by some remnant of that old friendship which the French had, or rather, pretended to have had for the Scots, received the Highland detachment with loud acclamations, and the entire population of the little city followed them through its gloomy old streets, till Ronald halted before the Hôtel de Ville, where the magistrates distributed the billet orders. The soldiers were treated with the utmost attention and kindness by the citizens, and this was the more pleasant, because quite unexpected on entering the enemy's country. It was Ronald's lot to be quartered upon a manufacturer of those woollen commodities which, with iron plate, are the principal

commerce of Bavay. This worthy had a splendid residence outside the city, where his ample garden, orchard, &c. furnished every luxury that the delightful climate and fruitful soil of France could yield him. He received Stuart coldly, for he was one of those thorough-paced business mortals who consider the soldier a burden, a bore, a useless and unnecessary animal. His wife, a plump old dame, in a large French cap and ample petticoat, and mademoiselle her daughter, a lively and good-looking girl about twenty, seemed to think otherwise, and made all the preparations in their power to receive the soldier with attention. There is a mysterious something in the scarlet coat which, to the feminine portion of this world, is quite irresistible.

The young lady made arrangements to give a little *fête* that evening, and all her female companions—everybody that was any body in and about Bavay, were to be there, and the whole house was turned topsy-turvy; but she was wofully disappointed.

She had been singing and tinkling with the guitar and piano to Ronald for the greater part of the day, and he amused himself by sitting beside her, turning over the leaves of music-books and albums, saying soft little nothings all the while. Madame the mother often sang in accompaniment, and they had become quite like old acquaintances. But the gruff manufacturer of cotton hose and shirts had watched their proceedings with a louring eye, and towards evening he took up a new position, which cut short

the preparations for the *fête*. He placed both mother and daughter in durance vile, by locking them up in some retired room; after which he rode off with the key in his pocket. Whether he was influenced by jealousy, or by national dislike, it is impossible to say, but the first is rather unlikely. Mademoiselle was tolerably agreeable, and had a very white hand for the daughter of a plebeian; but her mother was ugly enough to have frightened an old troop-horse, and Monsieur, the cotton manufacturer of Bavay, need have given himself no uneasiness on her account. But the awkward affair made a great noise in the town, and the story was related with various pleasant additions and variations by the officers of the *forty-twa* on their arrival at Clichy camp, and there was many a hearty laugh at Ronald's expense in the mess-rooms of the ninth brigade.

Next morning, while the ladies were still under lock and key, the detachments quitted the ancient capital of the Nervii, and marched for La Coteau.

They were now in France; the boasted, "the beautiful, the invincible, the sacred France," marching over it, treading upon its soil,—with bayonets fixed, drums beating, and all the pomp of war,—unobstructed and free, as conquerors. The proud and triumphant feelings attendant on such circumstances conflicted in their breasts with the sentiments of Lord Wellington's order, desiring that the allied army were "to remember that their respective sovereigns were the allies of his Majesty the king

of France, and that therefore France must be considered as a *friendly* country." The inhabitants of the towns, and the rural districts also, beheld them march on with apparent apathy; whatever their secret feelings might have been, they were admirably concealed. A few old friends of the Bourbons may be excepted, and these were chiefly old men and women, living in remote parts of the country. In some little villages they were received with shouts of welcome: in large towns, their drums and pipes gave forth the only sounds heard in the streets.

At Cambray, Stuart was agreeably surprised to find that, by certain changes which had taken place in the regiment, he had, as Lisle predicted, gained his "spurs," and was now regimental major.

"You may thank your lucky stars for this rapid promotion, Stuart," said the Guardsman who had saved his life at Mons.

"I may thank death,—the slaughter of Maya, Vittoria, Orthes, Toulouse, and Waterloo rather," replied Ronald. "Certes! I have no reason to complain, though I have seen work, both hard and hot, while *roughing it* in the Peninsula."

"But a major!" continued the other, "and only three-and-twenty! Major! a rank ever associated with ease and good living, the gout, and six allowances of wine at the mess, with a belt of greater girth than that of any other man in the regiment! I congratulate you, my friend, and propose that

we wet the commission." And it was 'wetted' forthwith accordingly, in some excellent *eau-de-vie.*

This promotion made Ronald completely happy; it was the more agreeable because, like his accession to the property of his uncle, it was quite unlooked-for. As for the death of the latter, he had neither reason to be glad nor very sorry; but he felt as merry as a man can be who has suddenly succeeded to a handsome fortune, and he demonstrated the fact by tossing his bonnet a dozen of times to the ceiling, at which strange employment his friend of the Coldstream surprised him in his billet at Brussels.

They continued their route by Peronne, Saint Quentin, by the handsome town of Compiegne on the Oise, and through Senlis. The beauty and fertility of the country through which they marched, formed a continual theme of conversation and wonder. Often, for the space of thirty miles, their line of march would be overshadowed by a profusion of apple and pear trees, bordering the highway like one long and matchless avenue. The trees were laden with ripe and tempting fruit; and, in those places where the harvest had commenced, all the inhabitants of the district, men, women, and children, were employed in beating the golden produce from the trees with long poles, and gathering it into vast heaps, which were borne off in carts or baskets to the cider presses. Every where Nature seemed in

her richest bloom and beauty, and the hawthorn flower, the day-flower, the woodbine, and the honeysuckle filled the air with the most fragrant perfumes. The march from Brussels to Paris was perhaps the most agreeable that the soldiers had ever performed.

On the 26th of September the detachment arrived at Clichy, a village about two or three miles from Paris. Behind it the British camp was formed, and the long lines or streets of white canvas bell-tents pitched on the grassy bank sloping down to the Seine, all shining white as snow in the sun and with 'the union' floating over them, formed an agreeable prospect amid the universal green of the scenery around. Guards and sentries were posted round the encampment at regular distances. The regiments were on their several evening parades, and a loud but somewhat confused medley of martial music was swelling from amid the tents, and floated away through the still evening air. On the smooth green banks, and by the sandy margin of the clear blue river, hundreds of soldiers' wives were engaged in the homely occupation of washing and bleaching for the troops; while swarms of healthy but ragged-looking children, belonging to the camp, gambolled and scampered about the green, sailed little ships on the river, played at hide-and-seek among the tubs, around the tents and sentries, as they made the welkin ring with shouts of hearty English merriment. Beyond the camp was seen the snug French village, with its picturesque and old-fashioned houses

and still older trees, which had survived many generations of men. There was something very pleasing in the aspect of some of the ancient mansions, the high bevelled roofs, with the upper stories projecting far above the lower,—the walls displaying a quantity of planks running up and down, and crossways, and the gables ornamented with a variety of gilt finials and weathercocks,—all showing the grotesque taste of a remote age. Still farther beyond Clichy rose the smoke and spires of Paris, which spread afar off like a wilderness of stone and lime, from which rose a murmur like that from a beehive, —the strange mingling but musical hum of a vast and distant city.

Ronald soon 'handed over' his detachment, and joined the group of his comrades on the evening parade. By them he was congratulated on his promotion and recovery, and received such an account of the delights of Paris and the neighbourhood of Clichy, that he regretted having been compelled to tarry so long at Brussels.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CHÂTEAU DE MARIELLE.

IMMEDIATELY after parade next day, Ronald departed from Clichy on a visit to Paris, "the City of delights," as an enthusiastic French author has termed it,—the famous Paris of which so much has been said, sung, and written. But Ronald was, to a certain degree, disappointed. The look of every man was sad and louring. The armed sentinels of the allies were in every street, their guards on every barrier; cannon were planted to rake every thoroughfare and avenue, and the artillery-men were around them, match in hand, by day and night. The soldier slept with his accoutrements on, and the horse in his harness; and to ensure the peace of the capital, the whole of the troops were ready to act on a moment's notice. The banner of Blucher waved over Paris, and his advance was in front of it, in position on the Orleans road; a brigade of British occupied the Champs Elysées, and the union jack and the white standard of Austria waved over the summit of Montmartre. Proud Gaul was completely humbled, and the Parisian had lost all his

swagger, his laughter, and lightness of head and heart. Many of the British officers were insulted, abused,—I believe were spit upon by the lower classes, when the allies first entered the French metropolis. The people had no other means of giving loose to the sentiments of rage, hatred, and hostility which boiled within them. A resort to open violence in arms would only have ended in the destruction of Paris, and the annihilation of its inhabitants. The defeat on the plains of Waterloo will not be soon forgotten in France. Like the murder of Joan of Arc, it will be handed down from parent to child; and thus, from one generation to another, the hereditary hatred to "perfidious Albion" will increase rather than diminish.

In Paris, and in France generally, the Highland garb attracted more attention, and perhaps respect, than that of any other nation. Notwithstanding the bitter hatred which the French avowedly bear to the whole Isle of Britain, they sometimes make a distinction between the Scot and his southern neighbour, as if they were now, as of old, politically aliens to each other. At the cafés, the restaurateurs, the concerts, theatres, promenades, the Boulevards, the Jardin des Tuileries, the Champ de Mars, the Bois de Boulogne, and public places of every kind, the officers who wore the Celtic garb found themselves treated with the utmost respect, attention, and even kindness, when their countrymen belonging to regiments 'in breeks' experienced marked coldness and

aversion. The figure of a Highland officer passing a milliner's shop, invariably brought all the girls in it rushing to the door. "An officer of the Scots!" was the cry, and all the pretty grisettes were in the street in a moment, to stare at and talk of the stranger until he was out of sight.

Although Ronald had no acquaintances in Paris, excepting those made by frequenting public places, yet he was well pleased with the Parisians, and as long as he had money to spare and to spend, he enjoyed himself in a manner that he had never done before. Through his banker in London, he drew many a cool hundred on his Scotch agents, Messrs. Diddle and Fleece; and, for a time, he wasted among grisettes, Frenchmen, and fools, rather more than was quite prudent. Being junior major, he had of course nothing to do but to amuse himself, appear on parade once a-day, and ride round the guards and posts when on duty: he spent the whole day in Paris, and generally returned to camp when the *reveille* was beating, so that his hours were rather *early* than late.

One evening, when making up a party for the next day, the hard visage of Sergeant Macrone appeared at the door of the tent, announcing that his round of pleasure was closed. The orderly-book —that tome of ill omen, with its brass clasps and parchment boards, was handed in, while the non-commissioned officer, raising his hand to his sun-burned and wrinkled forehead, conveyed the unplea-

sant intelligence "that her honour was for tuty,—no the tay pefore the morn, put the fera neist."

"To-morrow? The devil, Macrone! do you say so?" cried the impatient major, snatching the book from the hand of the Celt, and scanning over the brigade orders. "'Major Ronald Stuart, of the Gordon Highlanders, will take command of the detachment ordered to proceed to—' to where? A cursed cramped hand this! Who wrote these orders, Macrone?"

"The orderly sergeant, sir."

"Who is orderly?"

"Just my ainsel, sir. Hoomh!"

"Stupid! Could you not have said so at once. '—Command of the detachment proceeding to the Château de Marielle, to relieve the Hanoverian regiment of Kloster Zeven.' Does anybody know where the Château de Marielle is?"

"Two days' march from this," said Macildhui; "near Melun. I know the place. Archy Douglas and I have shot and coursed over it for a whole week, without leave or license. 'Tis the property of the Marquis of Laurieston."

"What!" exclaimed one, "old Clappourknuis's brother?"

"The same. You remember him at Merida."

"And what do the wiseacres at head-quarters mean, in sending a detachment there?"

"I suppose they scarcely know themselves. But obedience— We all know the adage."

"Wellington is the man to keep us in mind of that; and old Pack too, with his drills for five hours every Sunday after divine service."

"And so," said Stuart, "we must forego all the gay scenes of Paris to live in an old château among rooks and ancient elms. Country quarters spoil many a gay fellow: we had better leave our razors at Clichy."

"Wellington has ordered you on this service as a change, and to cure you of dangling after actresses and grisettes; for in Paris they quite spoil decent Highlandmen like ourselves."

"There will be neither the first nor the last at Melun,—nothing but brown-visaged and red-haired dairy-maids. I hope the château contains Laurieston's family—some agreeable young ladies especially, to make us amends for the loss we sustain in being ordered so far from Paris and this agreeable camp of Clichy, where we have always dry canvas, soft grass, and plenty of sunshine and *vin ordinaire*."

"Ladies! I hope so," added Macildhui. "Pretty faces, guitars, and pianos enliven country quarters amazingly."

Ronald and the four officers who accompanied him were doomed to be disappointed, for the château was occupied only by the regiment of Kloster Zeven, and a few aged servants. The old marchioness and her daughters had retreated to Paris on the first arrival of the lads in scarlet and buff. The Hanoverians marched out of the court of the

château, with their bugles playing one of those splendid marches for the production of which Germany is so famous: the Highlanders marched in at the same moment, with carried arms, and their pipes playing "The wee German Lairdie," a tune which Macvurich, the leading piper, adopted for the occasion.

The château stood close to the margin of the Seine, not far from the quiet and pretty little town of Melun, embowered among aged chesnuts, and surrounded by orchards and groves. It was a large irregular building of the days of Louis XII., and was said to have once been honoured as the residence of the celebrated Lady de Beaujeu. It was covered with carved work in wood and stone, and was surmounted by numerous turrets, vanes, and high roofs, covered with singular round slates jointed over each other like the scales of a serpent. It was in every respect a mansion of the old school, and would have been the permanent residence of some respectable ghost of the olden time, had it stood in England, or more especially in Scotland.

The soldiers were billeted at free quarters on the tenants, while the officers took up their residence in the château, to the servants of which orders had been given by the proprietor to provide them with every thing they required. Here they enjoyed themselves much more than at Clichy, and the rickety old house was kept in an uproar the whole day, and sometimes the whole night too, by their merriment, pranks, and folly. Its splendid chambers, saloons,

and galleries were a good exchange for a turf floor and canvas tent, which, in rainy weather, was never water-tight till it was thoroughly soaked through. The beds, with hangings of silk, ostrich plumes, and silver fringes, for camp shake-downs, and the white satin chairs, stuffed with down, were also a good exchange for stone seats, trunks, cap-cases, knapsacks, ammunition barrels, or whatever else could be had in the encampment. The mornings were spent in riding, the days in shooting, till the preserves were ruined and the game exterminated; and the evenings were devoted to chess and cigars, moistened with a few bottles of *Volnay*, *Pomard*, *Lafitte*, *champagne*, port, or sherry, for all the cellars were at their absolute command. A bull-reel generally concluded their orgies, or the sword-dance, performed on the dining-tables; after which they were all carried off to bed by their servants, who, on one occasion, required the aid of a fatigue party.

France is a glorious country in which to live at free quarters, and the Highlanders remained till the end of October completely their own masters, away from old Sir Dennis, from Wellington, and staff-office surveillance, amid merriment and jollity, spending their days and nights as they had never spent them before in country-quarters, which are generally so dull and lifeless. In the frolic and festivity of their superiors the privates fully participated, and many a merry though rather confused dance did they enjoy with the cottagers by moonlight on

the grassy lawn, where the slender peasant girl, the agile husbandman, and the strong thickset clansman mingled together, leaping and skipping, with better will than grace, to the stirring sounds of the warlike bagpipes.

There was one subject alone which kept Ronald in a certain state of uneasiness,—the non-arrival of letters from his father, although he had regular despatches from Alice and her brother, which were brought him every fortnight from the *Hôtel de Postes* at Melun by Macvurich, who acted as postman for the château. He concluded that all were well at the old tower, but that by some strange fatality his father's letters were always destined to miscarry.

On the 26th of October they took a sad adieu of the venerable Château de Marielle, of its saloons, its parks, its emptied cellars and rifled preserves. Right glad was old Chambertin, the butler, to behold them depart; and I dare say he thanked Providence devoutly, when the last gleam of their bayonets flashed down the old gloomy chestnut avenue. Late on the night of the 25th, an aide-de-camp (Lieut. D—— of 22nd Dragoons) brought Stuart an order, directing him to remove his detachment to Clichy, from which the regiment was about to march *en route* for Calais. It was eleven at night when the order arrived; and by daybreak next morning they were all on the road, with bag and baggage, and had left Melun far behind them. The soldiers were overjoyed at the prospect of returning home, and they

cheered and huzzaed lustily as they marched along, and displayed their handkerchiefs on ramrods, and their bonnets on their bayonets, in the extravagance of their delight. So eager were they to rejoin, that they marched back the twenty-eight miles in one day, and arrived in the camp at Clichy just as the bugles were proclaiming sunset.

On the tented ground all were in a state of commotion and preparation. Many regiments were under orders for England; the brigades were broken up, and many alterations were made regarding those troops that were to remain in France, to form the 'Army of Occupation,' for three years. Next day Ronald mounted and set off for Paris, to pay some of his old haunts a last visit, and to avoid the bustle of the camp, where he left entirely to the care of Warristoun, his servant, the task of packing and arranging his baggage for the cars.

CHAPTER XVI.

PARIS, DE MESMAI, AND THE HÔTEL DE CLUGNY.

"A light heart and a thin pair of breeches
Go through the world, my boys."

Old Song.

WHILE riding slowly along the Boulevard de la Madeline, Ronald saw before him an officer,—a Frenchman, but one with whose figure he imagined he was acquainted. He was a tall and handsome man, and wore the scarlet uniform of Louis the Eighteenth's garde-du-corps.

"I'll bet a hundred to one that is De Mesmai," said Stuart, communing with himself. "The rogue has changed sides; but I think I should know him by that inconceivable swagger of his."

There was no doubt of his being the cuirassier; and, as he presently stopped to speak at the door of a shop in the Rue Royale, Stuart touched him on the shoulder.

"Monsieur de Mesmai," said he, holding out his hand, "I hope you are quite well. You have not forgotten me, surely: we had some odd adven-

tures together in Spain. You remember the *cura* of?—"

"Monsieur—monsieur— *Diable!* I have quite forgotten your name."

"Stuart, of the Gordon Highlanders."

"Stuart? I remember now. A thousand pardons, —and as many welcomes to Paris!" exclaimed the Frenchman, grasping his hand and breaking into a profusion of bows, every one of which threatened to jerk to the other side of the Boulevard the little red cap which surmounted his large curly head.

"You have been very little about Paris, surely, Monsieur Stuart, very little indeed since the—" he paused and smiled bitterly, "since the allies came to it."

"I have been for two months in country quarters at the Château de Marielle, near Melun."

"Delightful place: I know it well. Fine horse that of yours; very like my old cuirassier."

"And so you have changed sides, I see; like Soult and many others."

"No, by the name of the bomb!" cried the Frenchman, his cheek flushing while he spoke. "No, faith! compare me not with Soult! I was one of the last who quitted the great Emperor, and my honour is spotless. But what could I do, Monsieur Stuart? He has been hurried on by his destiny, his evil genius, or some such villainous agent, to wreck the fame and fortune of himself, his soldiers, and of France, by delivering himself up—

sacre! to the British. What was I then to do? I had been a soldier from my youth upwards. I had interest to procure a commission as captain in the guards of Louis, who is pleased, *sacre nom de*—bah! to array us in scarlet; and I've been in Paris ever since Waterloo, where I received a severe wound. I have had hard work to get back from King Louis' ministers the poor remnant that dice, wine, and women have left of mine ancient patrimony, which has descended to my worshipful self through as long a line of respectable ancestors as ever wore bag-wigs, steel doublets, and long swords. I lost my château of Quinsay when I went with the Emperor to Elba—that dismal isle, which the devil confound! I gained it again on his happy return to France,—lost it at Waterloo; but regained it when I donned the scarlet in the guards of the most worshipful Louis, our dread lord and sovereign. *Peste!* After all, I am a lucky dog."

It may be imagined that Ronald, having once fallen in with this veteran scapegrace, would have found it by no means easy to escape from his society, even had he felt disposed to venture on attempting the feat. So well was the young Highlander acquainted with the probabilities in this particular, that he resolved to leave it unattempted; and having, by especial and all but unhoped-for good luck, managed, though in company with his unhesitating friend, to pass two days and nights without coming to any serious bodily harm, he began to feel it in-

cumbent on him to return thanks for his preservation, and to prepare for his approaching departure from the "City of delights."

Before De Mesmai could be induced to allow himself to be persuaded of the necessity of even the last of these proceedings, he insisted on a visit to the Baron de Clappourknuis, who, he averred, had made his peace with the new ministry, kissed the hand of Louis XVIII., burned his commission from Napoleon, and resided quietly at the venerable Hôtel de Clugny.

"This cunning old grey-beard and I took different sides in the last uproar," said the captain, as they walked along. "He went with Louis to Ghent; while I, as in duty bound, joined— But I had better say nothing more. We are now in the streets of Paris, where every second man is either a jack-booted *gendarme* or a villainous government spy. Monsieur le Baron saved his dirty acres by this policy, while I narrowly lost mine and the old house of Quinsay, with its ruined hall, where a colony of rooks, bats, and owls have been comfortably quartered for more than twenty years. Clappourknuis is as little enamoured of campaigning, as I am of his crack-jaw name. No, by the bomb! had he loved the flash of bright steel and the clank of accoutrements, he would have joined the Emperor on his quitting Elba. And yet I once beheld him charge bravely at the head of a regiment of Polish lancers. They were attacking a solid square of the regiment

of Segovia; and it was a splendid sight to behold them, as they swept past the flank of the cuirassiers in line. At the first blast of the trumpet their thousand lances sunk at once to the rest, their bright heads flashing like a shower of falling stars; and the next moment they were riding into the mass of terrified Spaniards, as one would ride through a river. But he has hung his sabre on the wall, and now reposes in the ancient hôtel, basking in the smiles of the fair Diane, and snugly ensconced under the shadow of his laurels, which, by-the-by, are very likely to grow into other ornaments less agreeable to his martial brow, if he does not look a little sharper after Madame."

"I told you of my adventure with her on the Pyrenees."

"Yes; you will be a welcome friend, unless the story has roused some unpleasant surmises in the mind of the baron, who is rather inclined to be suspicious, although his pate is so thick that we considered it sabre-proof in the 'Devil's Own.' I know that he looks upon me with eyes the reverse of friendly. *Parbleu!* what care I? Madame Diane behaves to me with remarkable attention. Ha! my friend, you see what it is to have a name: all the women of Paris either love or fear me. While Monsieur le Baron sits in a corner moping and growling over his swaddled and gouty leg, I draw my chair beside Madame at the harp, and sit turning over the leaves of her music, exchanging soft glances, and

saying things quite as soft between. She is an amazingly fine creature, although she jilted so cruelly poor Victor d'Estouville of the Imperial Guard."

"If this is the footing on which you visit the Hôtel de Clugny, I think I could scarcely have chosen a more unlucky companion for my morning call."

"*Pardieu!* Monsieur, this is Paris, where no husband of sense makes himself in the least uneasy about the intrigues of his wife, and I should wish to teach old Clappourknuis a lesson. He was twelve months a prisoner in England, where he picked up some of the strangest notions in the world about conjugal fidelity and other matters, which, in France, we know only by name. He must now pay the penalty of marrying a giddy creature, young enough to be his grand-daughter. We have a proverb among us, *mon ami*, which says, 'Beware of women, of fire, of water, and the regiment de Sault.' Now I am ready to demonstrate to you logically, that the first part of that proverb— But, poh! here is the residence of Monsieur le Baron. *Pardieu!* a strange old rookery it is; and yet he admires it, because it is the oldest house in Paris."

Passing through an archway, they found themselves in an irregular sort of quadrangle, formed by buildings in a very ancient style of architecture, with mullioned windows, Gothic cusps and pinnacles, casements on the roof, two octagon towers projecting into the court, and one circular turret, which

was built out from the wall, and shot up to a great height above the others. Numerous coats of arms and initial letters appeared above the doors and windows, and an antique fountain sparkled and murmured in a corner of the court, with a drooping tree spreading its branches over the stone basin into which the water fell. There was an appearance of picturesque and gloomy grandeur about the place, but there was likewise an air of desolation and decay without, which did not correspond with the rich hangings and furniture that appeared through the open windows; while the bustle which pervaded the court and passages, showed that the house was occupied by a large establishment.

"A strange old place, this."

"*Diable!* yes; a gloomy old bomb-house, fit only for the bat and the owl. And yet 'tis here the baron keeps Madame Diane, one of the gayest women within the gay and glorious circle of the Boulevards. 'Tis the Château de Clugny; but for Heaven's sake and our own, do not say any thing about it to the baron, who has of late been seized by a fit of antiquarianism, or we shall probably have the whole history of it rehearsed, from the time of Noah down to the present day."

The baron was at home, and a servant announced their names.

He was not much changed in appearance since Ronald had seen him in Estremadura; he looked as rough and weather-beaten as ever, and sat in a

gilded easy chair, rolled in a rich brocaded dressing-gown, with one of his legs swaddled up in a multitude of bandages, and resting upon a cushion. A small velvet forage-cap covered his grey hair, and half revealed a deep scar from a sabre-cut across the forehead.

The apartment into which the visitors were shown, was a splendid old chamber fitted up as a library; and a softened light, which stole through between the thick mullions and twisted tracery of two large windows, cast the varied tints of the stained glass upon the long shelves of richly gilt but musty old books, on globes, on antique swords and fragments of steel armour, on ancient chairs and deep-red hangings, on spurs and helmets, and on rolls and bundles of papers, heaped and in confusion. The ceiling was covered with stucco fret-work and gilding. Three large portraits were in the room: these were likenesses of the famous Mississippi Law—as he was styled; of Beau Law, shot at the siege of Pondichery, fighting against the British; and of the Marquis of Laurieston, in his uniform as a General of the Empire, covered with gold oak-leaves and Orders.

The Baron, whom they found immersed in the pages of a huge and antique tome, threw it aside on their entrance, and bowed with an air of politeness so constrained, that it was evident Captain de Mesmai was far from being considered a welcome visitor. The consciousness that he had such an introducer made Stuart feel rather uncomfortable, but De Mes-

mai's consummate effrontery caused him to value the baron's coldness not a rush. A piano, which stood at one end of the room, was closed. The young baroness was not then at home.

"*Monsieur le Baron,*" said the captain, placing his cap under his arm, and leading forward Stuart, "allow me to introduce Major Stuart, an officer of a Scots regiment, and a very particular friend of mine, who has come to pay you a visit before marching for Calais to-morrow."

"*Eh bien!*" said the baron, extending his hand, and raising his eyebrows. "I am very happy to see Monsieur Stuart; his name is one for which I have a very great respect. But," he added with a smile, "you give him a bad recommendation in saying he is a 'particular friend' of yours. Remember, you are considered the greatest *roué* and libertine that Paris contains,—between the Champ de Mars and La Roquette."

"*Pardieu!*"

"In truth you are a very sad fellow," continued the baron, while a servant placed chairs for the visitors. "Your name is on every man's tongue."

"And woman's too."

"Worse still. Ay, Maurice, in Massena's corps we considered you no apostle. But draw your chairs nearer to the fire; 'tis cold this morning. And here, you Monsieur Jacques," addressing the servant; "bring a couple of logs for the fire, and place the glasses and decanters on the table."

A smoky wood fire blazed in a large basket or grate of brass and iron-work placed on the hearth-stone: above it rose the arch of an antique mantel-piece. The square space around the grate was covered with small diamond-shaped pieces of Delft ware, which were neatly joined together, and reflected the light and heat.

"Monsieur le Baron will remember that I have not had the pleasure of seeing him since we were last together in Spanish Estremadura," said Ronald; "at Almendralejo, or Villa Franca, I think."

"Indeed, monsieur!" replied the old man, bowing. "Ah, *misericorde!* I was a prisoner then. You must excuse me; but I have seen so many places and faces, that if I do not exactly remember—"

"I am the officer who shared his ration-biscuit with you one morning at Merida, when the troops were so scant of provisions."

"What! *Mon Dieu!*" cried the old soldier, grasping him energetically by both hands, "are you that officer?"

"I am the same, monsieur."

"How happy I am to have you here in Paris,—in my own house, that I may repay you—at least, as far as hospitality can—for the bestowal of that half biscuit, wet and mouldy as it was from being carried—"

"A forty miles' march in a wet havresack. I was about to take command of an out-lying picquet, and

the biscuit was my first ration for three consecutive days."

"Ay, my friends," said De Mesmai with unusual gravity, while he filled up the glasses, "those were stirring times, when one might see true soldiering."

"I well remember the morning," continued the baron; "and very disconsolate fellows your picquet seemed, as they marched by the light of the grey dawn along the muddy Plaza, with their muskets slung, and their feathers and great coats soaked in water, for the rain was pouring down like a second deluge. On my honour, monsieur! I have often thought of the generous Scottish officer and the wet biscuit. I had been famishing for eight and forty hours. Ah! 'twas an interesting adventure that."

"Not so interesting by one half," said De Mesmai slowly, while a wicked smile lurked on his moustached mouth; "not so singular by one half as my friend's adventure with the baroness on the Pyrenees, after King Joseph's misfortunes at Vittoria. There is something very unique, quite romantic, in that story."

"Monsieur, was it you who—"

Stuart began to murmur something about having "had the pleasure to be of some service to the baroness—"

"I have heard of it," said the baron. "Oh, monsieur, you quite overpower me with your services. How shall we ever repay you!"

"I was merely instrumental. The officer who had the honour to escort the baroness to Gazan's outposts was killed soon afterwards, when Soult forced the passes."

"On the 25th. Twenty devils! I was there," said the baron, turning up his eyes. "Bloody work it was, and your mountaineers defended the hills with a valour bordering on madness. Your health! monsieur. 'Tis plain *vin ordinaire,* this; I am restricted to its use, but the decanter next you contains *Lafitte.*"

"I will take *Lafitte,* with your permission."

The baron bowed.

"*Vive l' Empereur!*" muttered De Mesmai as he raised his glass, while the baron held up one finger warningly, and cast a furtive glance at the door. "I pray to Heaven," continued the captain, whom some old recollections had excited, "that the *violet* may return to France in the spring." He drank enthusiastically. The baron emptied his glass in silence, and Ronald did the same, although he knew that *the violet* meant Napoleon, who was known by that name among his friends and adherents.

"Well, Maurice; I heard you were about to be married to a widow with three streets,—old Madame Berthollet, of the Rue de Rivoli," said the baron. "Or perhaps you are already married?"

"Diable! monsieur," said De Mesmai, indignantly; "do *I* look like a married man!"

"I know not, Maurice; but I imagine that the

gay old lady would have little reason to rejoice in her domestic speculation. You are the best man in Paris to make her golden Louis and Napoleons vanish like frost in the sunshine. And so, monsieur," addressing Stuart, "your regiment marches to-morrow?"

"For Calais, *viâ* Montfort, where we shall be joined by two other Scottish regiments, which are also under orders for home."

"A good voyage to the gallant Scots! as our fashionable song says," replied the baron, emptying his glass.

"Excellent!" cried De Mesmai, before Stuart could thank the baron; "and I hope that Madame will soon return, as I wish very much to hear her perform that piece on the piano. Madame Berthollet—"

"Of the Rue de Rivoli?" interrupted the baron.

"—Informed me that her style excels the most celebrated masters in Paris."

"Indeed!" said the baron coldly, but bowing to De Mesmai, whom he heartily wished at the bottom of the sea, or any other place than the Château de Clugny, where his visit had now extended to twice the usual time of a morning call.

"By the bomb! here comes Madame!" said the *ci-devant* cuirassier, as a carriage drove into the court. "Monsieur le Baron must allow me the honour—"

He snatched up his cap, and vanished from the

room, while the features of the invalid assumed a most vinegar aspect of anger and uneasiness, which he attempted to conceal from Ronald by conversing about the weather and other trivial matters. Meanwhile the captain, with all the air of a true French gallant, assisted the baroness to alight, and led her into the house. They were long in ascending the staircase, and the baron's face grew alternately red and white, while he fidgeted strangely in his easy chair. At last a servant opened the door of the room, and the handsome captain, with his right hand ungloved, led forward Madame, who, as she swept in with her long rustling skirt, and with the feathers of her bonnet drooping over a rich shawl, appeared a very dashing figure, quite a woman of *ton,* and possessing all that indescribable *je ne sais quoi* of face and figure, which are wholly the attributes of what the Scots call 'gentle blood,' and which never can be attained by the vulgar. Her morning drive on the Boulevards, the exercise of ascending the steep old stairs of the hôtel, and perhaps a sensation of pleasure at meeting with De Mesmai, had heightened the glow of her cheeks, and a rich bloom suffused them. Her eyes were sparkling with French vivacity, and she looked radiantly beautiful.

"Eh! monsieur, my dear friend!" cried she, springing towards Stuart with the bird-like step of a Parisian lady. "How happy, oh! how very happy I am to see you here! I would give you a pretty

kiss, if I dared. But pray, monsieur, be seated; and here, De Mesmai, help me off with my things."

"How, madame, do you recognise me after so long a lapse of time, and after such a very short interview? One at night,—by a picquet fire, too?"

"De Mesmai told me you were here," said she, as that adroit cavalier removed her bonnet and shawl, and even adjusted her hair, which was braided above her forehead and fastened behind with a pearl-studded comb *à la Grec.* The soldier laid aside the bonnet, arranged the veil, and folded the collar and shawl with so much the air of a *femme de chambre,* that Stuart could with difficulty repress a smile; but to the lady and her husband it appeared nothing unusual.

"The baroness is a fashionable beauty, certainly," thought the wondering Scot; "but my wife will not be a French woman, thank Heaven!"

"That will do, Maurice," said the lady, freely and easily; "that will do, I thank you. *Mon Dieu!* I shall never wear that horrid shawl any more; mantelets of satin, laced and furred, are becoming all the rage. Maurice, I know you have quite the eye of a *modiste;* tell me, don't you think that a mantelet will become me?"

"Madame would appear superb in any thing," replied the other without hesitation, but bowing low while he spoke.

"Oh, Maurice, you are getting quite common-

place. But I suppose it will become me as well as the venerable Berthollet of the Rue de Rivoli."

"Doubtless, madame," replied the Guardsman composedly; while, without noticing her roguish look, he handed her a glass of wine.

"And here, this dear naughty husband of mine asks me not a single question about my morning airing," said Madame, as she sprang up and arranged the cushions at the old man's back. "Maurice, help me to punch these pillows. Monsieur the baron has been poring over some musty old book till he has been quite overcome with *ennui*, I suppose. *Mon Dieu!* what a horrid thing it is to become an antiquary!" she continued, as she turned up her fine eyes, and shrugged her fair shoulders. "Do you know, Monsieur Stuart, that ever since the baron became a member of the *Comité Historique des Arts et Monumens*, he has been like a man bewitched!"

The attention of his beautiful wife restored the old man's urbanity and good humour, and when the baroness pressed the visitors to remain to dinner, he seconded her invitation, and they stayed.

Stuart had reason to regret that they did so, for De Mesmai's folly brought about a very disagreeable termination to the visit.

After much common-place conversation, he requested the baroness to favour them with the fashionable air then so much in vogue, and she at once acceded. The old baron was quite charmed

with his wife's performance, and, closing his eyes, beat time with his fingers on a worm-eaten volume of Pierre de Maimbourg; but his triumph was somewhat soured by the presence of De Mesmai, who seated himself close by Diane for the purpose of turning over the leaves, and he seemed quite in raptures with her. Stuart likewise was much pleased, for the soft tones of her voice were delightful to hear, and his patriotism was roused and his pride flattered by the words of the song,—'A good Voyage to the gallant Scots.' It was a quick and lively air, and had been first adopted by the garde-du-corps and other troops of Louis XVIII., after which it rapidly became popular: the ladies sounded it forth from their harps and pianos, the dandies hummed it on the Boulevards, the boys whistled it in the streets, and the grisettes sung it at their work; and, from reveillé till tattoo, scarcely any other tune was heard in the camps, barracks, and cantonments.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CATASTROPHE.

"Ah, madame!" exclaimed De Mesmai, whom experience among his countrywomen had taught that the dose of flattery could never be too strong for them, "how much we are indebted to you! Such brilliancy of instrumental execution, and such a voice! My friend, Major Stuart, will allow—or rather will be compelled to admit—that you far excel any other singer he has ever heard in Paris, Lisbon, or Madrid?"

Although this was not strictly true, Ronald of course replied in the affirmative. There is no flattery which can be too pointed for a *Parisienne,* who can hear, as mere matters of course, such observations as would bring the red blood rushing into the fair face of an English lady.

De Mesmai engrossed to himself nearly the whole conversation of the baroness, and they chatted away, with amazing volubility and merriment, on such light matters as the marriages, intrigues, and flirtations of one half of Paris,—the fashionable part at

least,—while the petulant baron, after various ineffectual attempts to interrupt their interesting *tête-à-tête*, abandoned the idea of doing so; and, while reconnoitring their position with watchful eyes, and listening with open ears, he gave Stuart a very long and very tiresome account of the learned society, to the affairs of which, since the peace of 1814, he had devoted his whole attention.

De Mesmai and the lady, or, to speak more correctly, the lady and De Mesmai, were seated on an opposite sofa, and so close, that their dark hair almost mingled together,—this, too, before the eyes of the baron. They conversed in a low tone, which every instant swelled out into a laugh; and such glances of deep and hidden meaning were exchanged, that, had they been observed, they would have entirely discomposed old Clappourknuis's antiquarian discussions about ruins, medals, coins, MSS., &c. &c. Stuart thought his friend a very odd fellow, and certainly the free manners of the baroness did not heighten his opinion of Parisian wives.

Dinner was served up in excellent style, but what it consisted of has nothing to do with this history. There were enough and to spare of wonderful French dishes, which the Highlander had never seen before, and probably has never heard of since. Stuart having led the baroness to the dining-room, De Mesmai led her back again to the library, falling into the rear of the baron, who was borne thither in his arm-chair by six stout valets, with his gouty leg

projecting like a bowsprit. In this trim, as host, he led the way from the table. Coffee and wine were awaiting them in the library, which was lighted up by wax candles placed in antique candelabras. The crimson curtains were drawn, and a cheerful fire blazed on the hearth and roared up the wide chimney. The old gilt volumes on the shelves, the steel arms and armour, the splendid picture-frames, the wine-decanters, the silver coffee equipage, and every thing else of metal or crystal, glittered in the ruddy light, and the baron's library appeared the most snug place imaginable.

Stuart, who had been accustomed to sit long at the mess-table,—rather a failing with the valiant ninety-*twa*,—was unable to adopt the foreign custom of taking coffee immediately after dinner. He therefore joined the baron in paying attention to a decanter of light French wine; but De Mesmai sipped the simple beverage, seated by Madame at a side-table where the coffee was served up, and his attentions became so very particular and decided, that in any house in Britain they must have ensured his exit by the window instead of the door. But the baron, although a very jealous husband, was a Frenchman, and consequently did not perceive any thing very heinous in the attention paid to his wife by the gay guardsman; yet he would rather have seen him lying at full length in the *morgue*, than seated at the little side-table with the baroness.

But Monsieur le Baron having dined to his entire

satisfaction, was rather inclined to be in a good humour, and, after a time, he was obliging enough to place the high stuffed back of his easy chair between himself and the *tête-à-tête* which his gay lady enjoyed with her still gayer cavalier.

Finding that Stuart was conversant with *Père d'Orleans*, the *Histoire des Croisades* of Pierre de Maimbourg, and other old authors,—thanks to the *tawse* of his dominie, the old minister of Lochisla,—the baron resolved to make a victim of him for the remainder of the evening, and bored him most unmercifully with long antiquarian and archæological disquisitions, which were varied only by still more tedious accounts of his campaigns under Napoleon.

He spent an hour in detailing enthusiastically the services and deeds of the Scots Guards* in France, from the time that Alexander III. sent them to Saint Lewis for service in the Holy Land down to the battle of Pavia, where the Scottish corps threw themselves into a circle around Francis I., and he was not captured by the enemy till only four of that brave band were left alive.

"And we are told in this book," continued the prosy baron, laying his hand on a mighty tome of Philip de Comines; "we are told in this book that the life of Louis XI., when he was attacked by the rebellious Burgundians at Liege, was saved solely by the valour of the Scots Guards, who formed a

* Now the 1st regiment of the line, or Royal Scots, the oldest corps in Europe.

rampart around him till the Burgundians were defeated."

"*Morbleu!* monsieur," said De Mesmai, who now joined them, as the baroness had withdrawn, "the story of the duel between the Sieur de Vivancourt of the regiment of Picardie and the Scots Royal, is worth all that you will find in Philip—Philip—*peste!* I have forgotten his name. But I will wager a hundred Napoleons to one, that he does not relate a story by one half so good as that which I have heard from you, of the unpleasant manner in which the English widow of Monsieur of France, Louis XII., was surprised in a *tête-à-tête* with the Duke of Suffolk, in this very apartment, by the furious Duke de Valois, who compelled her to marry Suffolk upon the very instant,—ay, *pardieu!* at the very drum-head, as the saying is."

Certain associations occurring to the baron's mind made him colour, as he raised his eyes from his flannel-cased legs, to the tall, erect, and soldier-like figure of De Mesmai. He glanced furtively at the chair of the baroness, but it was empty.

"Ay, Maurice, 'twas a strange affair that; but Monsieur of Valois should have given the English duke a year or two's residence in the Bastile for his presumption. The stone cages of Louis XI. were then in good condition, and should always have been tenanted by such blades as Monsieur of Suffolk."

"You are very savage in disposition, monsieur, to talk of punishing so slight a *faux pas* so severely.

But you will allow that a little gallantry is excusable here in our sunny clime of France." The old man glanced keenly at the swaggering guardsman, and saw a strange smile on his face. "A comfortable place this, faith!" he continued; "and if these old walls could speak, they would tell strange tales of hatred and sorrow, joy and grief. Many a fair one's scruples have been routed by the *coup-de-main* of the stout gallants of the olden time. Monsieur le Baron must know that our friend Stuart admires this old house of Clugny amazingly. You cannot conceive the sensations of pleasure with which he viewed that gloomy court."

These last observations were made by De Mesmai to serve an end of his own. It was the baron's hobby to have his house praised, and in return he invariably bored his visitors with a prolix account of it. Having, as he supposed, set fire to the train, De Mesmai retired to promenade in the garden with Madame, while her husband plunged at once into the history of the Hôtel de Clugny. He began with the time when its site was occupied by the palace of the Roman emperors in Gaul, the *Palatium Thermarum*, erected A. D. 300, from which date he traced its history down to Clovis, the founder of the French monarchy, thence to the time of Philip Augustus, who in 1218 bestowed it on one of his chamberlains. On the site of the Palatium Thermarum the Abbot of Clugny built the present hotel, which was finished and completed, as it stands at present, by

Jacques d'Amboise in 1505. James V. of Scotland resided in it for some months after his marriage with the beautiful and unfortunate Madeline of France. From that period the indefatigable baron related its vicissitudes, and those of its several occupants, down to the days of the Revolution. He was just describing a celebrated conclave of that revolutionary body, the section Marat, who met in the apartment where they were then conversing, when, on looking round, he became suddenly aware that the baroness and De Mesmai were both absent. He changed colour, stopped in his history, and became much disturbed.

"*Mon ami!*" said he, "where is the Captain de Mesmai?"

"I know not," said Stuart, looking round with surprise, and missing him for the first time. "He was here a moment since, and I did not see him leave the room."

"*Diable!*" growled the baron, grinding his teeth.

"He is probably in the garden enjoying a cigar. I observed him take from his pocket the silver case which he carries."

"A silver case? Pooh! he got that from the baroness."

"A handsome present."

"Ah! she gained it at some lottery in the Palais Royal," said the poor baron, making a desperate attempt to converse freely, while he rung a small

hand-bell. "*Attendez, Jacques:* tell Madame we should be glad to have the honour of her company, because Monsieur Stuart marches to-morrow, and—Ha! ha! what am I saying? You understand—be quick, Jacques," he cried to the valet, who had appeared at his summons. "She is either in her own apartment, or in some of the lower drawing-rooms."

His suspicions were still further aroused. Jacques returned in three minutes, saying that Madame could not be found; that she must have left the hotel, or be promenading in the garden.

"*Mon Dieu!*" roared the impetuous baron, gnashing his teeth at the astonished valet. "Leave the room, rascal! What are you staring at? I am undone! Hand the case, monsieur; these pistols—they are loaded. They are together—I knew it—in the garden. *Sacre!* I have long expected something of this kind. An assignation! the base minion! the worthless *ribaud!* I will have his blood! I will rip him up with my sabre! *Tête Dieu!* am I to be disgraced in my own house? Ha, ha! ho, ho!" and he laughed like a madman.

Stuart rose, feeling all the confusion and astonishment which a visitor might be supposed to experience at such a juncture. The baron seemed bursting with rage, and rolled about among the pillows of his easy chair, making fruitless efforts to raise himself upon his gouty limbs; and he raved

and swore in the mean time like a maniac. At last, in the extremity of his distress, he implored Ronald to see if they were in the garden.

"How very foolish he is making himself appear," thought Ronald, as he descended the lighted stair, laughing at the ludicrous aspect of the baron in his cap, gown, and bandaged legs, and his red weather-beaten visage flaming with the fury and exasperation into which he had lashed himself. Descending a stair in one of the octagon towers, he found himself in the garden. The night was very dark, the air was cold, and the trees, shrubbery, and bowers appeared to be involved in the deepest gloom. The darkness seemed greater, in consequence of his having just left the brilliantly-illuminated library, where old Clappourknuis sat growling like a bear with pain and anger. A curtain was drawn back from one of the windows of the hotel, and a stream of light falling across a walk of the garden, revealed the figure of a female. It was the baroness, and Stuart advanced to meet her, feeling considerable reluctance to announce the rage, or hint at the suspicions, of her husband. His cogitations were cut short by the lady springing forward, and throwing herself into his arms.

"*Maurice, mon cher ami!* how long you have kept me waiting," she exclaimed, in a loud whisper. "I have been here on this dreary walk nearly five minutes; and indeed—but one kiss, dear Maurice! and then— Oh! what is this? You have no moustaches. *Ah, mon Dieu!* what have I done?"

She had, when too late, discovered her mistake. At that moment a window of the library was dashed open, and the strange figure of the unfortunate archæologist appeared with a pistol in each hand, threatening death and destruction to all. The light which shone into the garden revealed the scene on the walk,—the baroness hanging on the breast of Stuart, whom, as he was without his bonnet and plaid, she had mistaken for De Mesmai in the scarlet uniform of the garde-du-corps. Clappourknuis muttered a tremendous malediction, and fired both pistols into the walk. Ronald escaped death as narrowly as ever he did, even on any occasion in Spain, and the lady was in equal peril. One ball struck from her head the high comb which confined her hair, and the other whistled within an inch of Stuart's nose; after which it shattered a gigantic flower-pot close by. Diane uttered a shriek, and fled like a startled hare from the garden; and, gaining her own apartment, shut herself up, and Stuart never beheld her again.

"*Morbleu!*" said the incorrigible De Mesmai, whom the destruction of the jar, and the consequent prostration of an immense American aloe, had revealed, "I was just looking for the baroness on the other side of the garden. *Sacre!* 'tis a most unlucky assignation this, and broken heads must follow! Ha! ha! how now, my most virtuous Scot, who will not dance with grisettes on Sunday, and yet makes an assignation with a married lady in a garden, and

at night! Where are all your precepts and fine sayings? Ho! ho! ho! Hark! how the baron storms and blasphemes, like any Cossack or Pagan!"

"The fierce old madman!" exclaimed Ronald, enraged at his narrow escape. "He was within a hair's-breadth of shooting me through the head!"

"Rather unpleasant, after all your campaigning, to be shot in this way, like a crow," replied the other, who was laughing so heartily that he clung to an apple-tree for support. "How romantic! A touching interview in the dark,—the lady all sighs, and the gentleman all animation! By the bomb, 'tis superb! What a pity there was no moon! A silvery moon would have made the whole affair just as it should have been. But then this unpleasant discharge of small arms—"

"Dare you attempt to lay the blame of this matter on me?" asked Ronald, indignantly. "You are alone the cause of all this uproar. The baron has mistaken me for you."

"And the baroness has done the same. *Diable!*"

"What is to be done now?"

"Retreat without beat of drum, I suppose."

"That would show but poor spirit, I think."

"*Eh bien!* you are right. I will show face. The baron is only a man, and a man five feet high by six round the waist. I will brazen it out, and swear by a *caisson* of devils 'tis all a mistake. I will, by the bomb! and could do so in the presence of his Jolliness the Pope. *Vive la joie!* Come with me,

my friend, and I will explain all the uproar to this outrageous baron. I am used to squabbles of this kind, and will soothe his vivacity. *Peste!* what a hideous noise he makes!"

The baron had roared himself hoarse, and Jacques, with five other stout servants, had been barely able to keep him fast in his arm-chair, where he panted, kicked, and bellowed, swearing by every thing in heaven and on earth that he would pistol De Mesmai, slay his wife, and murder them all. He would get a *lettre de cachet*,—forgetting that the days of such matters had happily passed away,—and immure them all in the dungeons of the Bastile. He would rouse the powers of darkness to revenge him! At last a terrible fit of the gout fairly stopped his clamour, and he was borne off to bed, speechless and in imminent danger. The baroness appeared no more, and De Mesmai, the cause of the whole disturbance, sat with perfect *nonchalance*, with his legs stretched out before the library fire, a glass of wine in one hand and twirling a moustache with the other, while swearing to Stuart by the bomb that he had never heard such an outcry before!

"Positively, my friend," said he, "had I carried off the baroness in a chaise and four, *en route* for Calais or Brussels, he could not have made a greater noise. *Peste!* I believe I am entitled to demand satisfaction for this annoyance. I shall certainly consult some of ours to-morrow, and hear what ought to be done."

It was evident that they would see the baroness no more that night, and the domestics of the establishment eyed them with strange looks; for though they were accustomed to the irascible temper of the baron, they were puzzled to account for such a sudden disturbance.

Stuart urged the impropriety of remaining longer, and they rose to withdraw. He looked at his watch; it was verging on midnight, and it was requisite that he should return to Clichy forthwith, if he would be with the regiment when under arms at daylight. On leaving, they walked for some time along one of the Boulevards, talking over the affair of the Hôtel de Clugny. De Mesmai did not attempt to exculpate himself, but laughed without ceremony at Stuart, who made some animadversions on his conduct.

"'Tis all a matter of opinion," said he, shrugging his shoulders, "all; and you must know the proverb—*L'opinion est la reine du monde.* 'Tis very true; so let us say no more, my friend."

When near the Place Victoire, they parted. De Mesmai had lodgings in one of the handsomest houses of the Place, although his company of the garde-du-corps was always quartered at the château. On taking leave, they shook hands heartily, and then parted, but without exhibiting much concern, although each knew that he would never meet the other again. But as soldiers, accustomed for years

to march from town to town, they were used to partings, and so bade each other adieu with happy *sang froid.*

Ronald never heard of De Mesmai again, and I am therefore unable to acquaint the reader how he settled matters with the baron, or if he married the fashionable widow of the Rue de Rivoli.

The streets were silent, and the night was dark. A cold and high wind swept along the desolate thoroughfares, and had extinguished many of the oil lamps, leaving many places involved in obscurity and gloom. It is not surprising, therefore, that Stuart should have mistaken his way. The dawn surprised him somewhere on the skirts of the town, and he had, consequently, to traverse nearly the whole of Paris to find the Champs Elysées. There he got his horse from the bat-man, in whose charge it had been left, and in three minutes he was away at full gallop for Clichy. He dashed along the Boulevard de la Madeline, the Rue de la Martin, of St. Croix and Clichy, and soon the fields were around him, bordering the road, while the spires and the streets of Paris were far behind, sinking in the distance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HOMEWARD MARCH.

"Adieu to the wars, with their slashes and scars,
The march and the storm and the battle!
There are some of us maimed, and some that are lamed,
And some of old aches are complaining;
But we'll take up the tools, which we flung by like fools,
'Gainst Don Spaniard to go a-campaigning."

Scott.

FATIGUED with want of sleep, and almost nodding in his saddle, Ronald reached the camp a little after sunrise. The Highlanders were under arms, formed in line on the green sward between the long streets of tents and the margin of the Seine. The ensigns had uncased the yellow silk colours, the drummers were bracing up their instruments, and Campbell sat motionless on horseback at about a hundred yards from the centre of the line, which he was surveying with a watchful eye. He was looking very cross, so Stuart prepared to be *rowed*.

"A pretty fellow you are, Ronald, to keep the whole regiment waiting in this manner! We were just about to march without you."

Ronald made no reply, but dashed up at full gallop, raised his hand to his bonnet, and then wheeling his charger round, backed him upon his haunches, causing him to curvet and rear that the rider might display a little horsemanship, as he galloped round the flank of the grenadiers and came up in his place on the left of the line with his sword drawn. As the band struck up, and the battalion broke into sections of threes and moved off, a cheer burst from the lips of every man, as a parting call to those comrades whom they were to leave behind them.

Saint Germains was the first stage. They were quartered for the night in the ancient palace, which had long been uninhabited and empty, and was consequently hastening to decay. Eighty years before, who could have imagined that the residence of the exiled Stuarts would have become the quarters of a Scottish regiment in the British service, and plaided and plumed in the garb of the Gaël! Who could have imagined that those desolate chambers, which had been the scene of so many sorrows and troubles to the royal exiles, would re-echo the strains of the heart-stirring pibroch! But the place was dreary, damp, and desolate. The court-yard was overgrown with grass, the gardens had become a wilderness, and the fountains and ornamental statues were in ruins, and covered with the moss of years. Strange and old associations connected with the palace and its inhabitants were awakened in the hearts of the

Highlanders, and Ronald-dhu, when the pipers played the retreat in the quadrangle, desired that it should be the 'Prince's Lament,' one of the most difficult pieces of our pipe music.

To the officers and soldiers of the Gordon Highlanders, being generally men from the most remote parts of the Highlands, the empty palace of Saint Germains formed a scene of no common interest. It was intimately connected with the misfortunes of that illustrious race, "of which (says a modern writer) no man can trace the beginning, and of which no Scotsman can bear to contemplate the *end;*" and the kilted sons of the North, as they wandered about its desolate chambers, made many observations which would have startled honest old George III., and have caused the Horse-Guards authorities to stand quite aghast, had they heard them. Although time, as it rolls on, is changing the manners of the Highlander and of his Lowland neighbour, the same chivalric feeling which brought forth the host of 1745 exists in the bosom of the former, and a spark yet lingers there which little might fan into a flame.

Mereville was the next halt. At the gate of the town they were received by a French regiment of royal volunteers, who had no uniform, but wore their cross-belts, &c. over their peasant's blouses of blue or white linen. They paid the compliments of war in very good style, while their band played the na-

tional anthem of Britain, and the burghers of Mereville rent the air with shouts of applause. At the barrier appeared the *maire*, arrayed in the garb of a past age,—a wide waistcoat and old-fashioned coat, with a silver-hilted sword and ruffles, and a wig and queue. He invited the officers to a *déjeûné* in the Hôtel de Ville, where he made a long and flourishing speech, descriptive of veneration for the British king and for the Scottish people. He spoke of the field of Vernuil, where the Scot and the Frenchman, drawing their swords side by side, as brothers and allies, had tamed the pride of England. *La belle Marie!* He laid his hand on his heart, and became quite eloquent on the subject of her wrongs and woes. He spoke of the alliances between the houses of Stuart and Bourbon, and of the many years of exile which the descendants from these marriages had spent in each other's territories.

The worthy old fellow was so much in earnest, and so enthusiastic on the occasion, that he even shed tears, struck himself a thousand times on the breast, and shrugged his shoulders and turned up his eyes quite as often.

Campbell replied in a short speech, which he had prepared during the long oration of Monsieur le Maire; but the good-will he gained by the first part of his address, was entirely lost by some unlucky after-allusion to the plains of Egypt and Sir Ralph Abercrombie.

From Mereville they marched to Montfort l'Amaury, a town twenty-eight miles west of Paris, where they were to join the 4th battalion of the Royals, and the 42nd Highlanders, also under orders for England.

At Beauvais, styled—because it has never been taken by force of arms—La Pucelle, the 92nd, to their no small joy, received intelligence that, on landing in England, their destination was to be the capital of their native country, where they were to be quartered for the ensuing winter.

Within four days afterwards, the streets of Calais rang to the notes of the pipe and drum, as the Scots brigade, on its homeward march, passed through the city to the harbour, where a fleet of small craft, provided by the authorities, lay in readiness to carry them over the Passage of Calais, as the straits are named by the French. The Cour de Guise, formerly the ancient English mint, was pointed out to Stuart by a French staff-officer, who rode beside him part of the way. He also showed him the statue of the patriotic Saint Pierre, which stands above the entrance of the town-hall, with its neck encircled by a rope, —the emblem of Saint Pierre's heroism, and of the obduracy of an English king. Many other places he pointed out which would have been interesting to the mind of a South-Tweeder, for often had the bluff English yeoman in his steel breast-plate, and the strong-handed archer in his doublet of Lincoln-

green, kept watch and ward on the walls and towers of Calais.

As the three Scots regiments marched along the spacious quay, a tremendous cheer burst from them at the sight of the opposite shore. The first view of Old England, after a long absence, is worth a myriad of the common-place adventures of life. The land of promise lay before them, but its shore seemed low and distant; and its chalky cliffs were shining white as snow in the morning sun, so pale and dim, that they seemed more like the edge of a vast field of ice than firm land. Every man strained his eyes towards it, and pointed out to his comrades the spires and villages, which he imagined he could trace through the dim haze that floated on the waters of the Channel. Some gazed long and fixedly, with moistened eyes and silent tongues. They thought of the land which lay five or six hundred miles beyond the shore before them,—the land of the rock and the cataract, the broom and the heather,—the land of their love and best affections, which had never been once absent from their minds during all the danger, the toil, and the glory of the great Peninsular war.

Poor Scotland! although she has lost her name and her place among nations, she is not the less dear to her sons.

The harbour of Calais presented a very animated scene. The frost had passed away: it was a warm,

sunny morning, and every thing was bright and glistening. From the great quay two long wooden piers jutted out into the water, which tossed and foamed around the green and sea-weed-covered piles which compose them.

These piers were lined by two or three battalions of French infantry, and behind them were dense crowds of spectators. The French flag was flying on the *beffroi*, or watch-tower, of the Hôtel de Ville, and on the bastions of all the little forts which defended the harbour. The basin was crowded with the boats and craft for the conveyance of the British troops, whom the French authorities were, no doubt, very glad to get rid of. Several British man-o'-war boats were pulling about in different directions. These had been sent by some of our Channel cruisers to superintend the embarkation.

As Ronald rode down towards a flight of steps, to clear the way for the regiment, a man-of-war's boat, manned by eight oars, came sheering alongside the jetty. Stuart dismounted to speak with the officer, who stepped forward from the stern, and, abandoning the tiller-ropes, shook him heartily by the hand; while the crew, and the crews of the other boats, pulled off their tarpaulin hats, and gave three hearty cheers of welcome to the red-coats. The cheer was taken up by the populace, and resounded along the quays: the French bands struck up the favourite air, 'A good Voyage to the gallant Scots,' while the

troops presented arms, and the officers saluted with their swords. As older regiments than the Gordon Highlanders, the Royal Scots and 42nd embarked first. About two hundred men were in each barge, and, as they moved from the shore by the aid of sail and sweep, their bands played the 'Downfall of Paris,' an air which could not have been very pleasant to French ears. With better taste, the band of the other regiment played '*Vive Henri Quatre*,' the notes of which mingled oddly with those of the bagpipes. The pipers of the whole brigade were seated in the bows of the boats, blowing a perfect storm of wild and discordant sounds.

The harbour, the shore, the crowded quays, receded and lessened; the cheers of the people died away, but the sharp rattle of the brass drums was still heard, and arms were seen glittering on the beach. The French troops were wheeling into open column, and marching through the gate of Calais, which faced the water. As the last section filed through, Ronald looked back for an instant. He saw the flash of French steel for the last time. Save himself, scarcely one had cast a look astern: it was to the increasing shores of England that every eye was directed.

They were soon far out in the Channel, amid fleets of merchantmen and stately ships of war. There is nothing which brings the power, the might, and the majesty of Britain so vividly before the

mind, as the splendid appearance of her ships of war. There is a something in the aspect of the formidable row of cannon frowning from the red ports, and the flag that waves above them, which a Briton never can behold without pride, and a foreigner without terror, chagrin, and humiliation.

On clearing the harbour of Calais, and getting fairly out into the straits of Dover among the shipping, the French airs gave place to 'Hearts of Oak' and other national strains; and the cheers with which the crew of every vessel they passed, merchantman or ship of war, greeted the homeward-bound fleet of decked boats with their military freight, afforded the utmost delight to the latter. These hearty welcomes from their countrymen on the sea, were but an earnest of what they were to receive on the land.

The long and glorious struggle in the Peninsula, the victorious termination of the short but most decisive campaign in Flanders, and the results, so important to Europe, of the victory at Waterloo, were yet fresh in every man's mind, and the people of Britain yearned to show their love for their countrymen who were now returning, after having proved themselves the first troops in the world.

It was lucky for this brigade of Scots that they returned so soon after Waterloo. Had those three thousand men fought and gained the battle alone, it

is impossible that greater admiration or applause could have been lavished upon them.

The shore increased in magnitude, seeming to rise from the water, and objects became more distinct. The wide extent of yellow sandy beach, the chalky cliffs, the light-houses, the buoys, were seen distinctly, and the flags of all the world were flying around them. The little fleet of galleys moved bravely; a light breeze bore them onward, and every stitch of canvas was set. The shore soon seemed close at hand. The old village spires, overhung with ivy, the lawns, the castles, the seats, and every thing, from the black old towers of Dover to the boats on the golden beach below, were all remarked and observed as objects of wonder.

"First on the shore! Hoigh!" cried a Highlander, plunging into the water as the boats, containing some of the 42nd, grounded near the beach. "Hurrah!" was the cry, and a hundred eager fellows leaped overboard, knapsacks, accoutrements, and every thing; and, with their kilts and sporrons floating on the surface of the water, waded ashore, while shouts of welcome rose from a crowd of the Dover people collected on the sands. The boats containing the Royals and part of the Gordon Highlanders, took the matter more "cannily," and, entering the harbour, landed their military passengers on the pier, where a gentleman stepped forth from the immense concourse assembled to witness the dis-

embarkation, and formally welcomed them to England; he then waved his hat as a signal to the people, and three hearty cheers were given, with one more for the Duke of Wellington.

All the craft in the harbour were decorated with flags and boughs of trees; standards and ribbons waved from every house-top and window. The Waterloo medal, glancing on the breast of every purple coat, attracted universal attention; the people were excited to the utmost pitch of enthusiasm and loyalty, and every proud feeling that is truly British was at its height. Each man vied with the other in the endeavour to show the esteem he felt for those whose deeds had been attracting the attention of the whole civilized world, and whose arms had arrested a torrent which once threatened to subvert every State in Europe. The brigade was billeted for that night in Dover.

"Now then, gentlemen, here we are, at last, in merry old England," cried Campbell, in boisterous glee, as, with his officers, he ascended the well-carpeted staircase of a handsome hotel in Dover. "Welcome roast beef and plum-pudding, with other substantials, and a long farewell to *castanos* and garlic, to soup-maigre, *potage au choux*, and the devil's broth. If the people would only grow wise and hang up all the limbs of the law, England would be the happiest land on earth. Look around you, gentlemen; here is comfort! Think on the wet tent,

and the wetter bivouac! But good-by to them all! for awhile at least."

The master of the hotel ushered them into a splendid drawing-room, where the appearance of the rich carpet, and the coal-fire blazing in the polished grate, attracted so much attention, and drew forth such encomiums, that mine host of the St. George marvelled in what part of the earth they had been campaigning. He knew not that a coal-fire and a carpet are almost unknown on the Continent.

"We have been for some time strangers to this kind of luxury, landlord," said Ronald, observing his wonder. "Our couch and our carpet has long been the green sod, and our covering the sky for many a year."

"England! merry old England!" exclaimed Campbell, throwing himself into a chair, and stretching his long legs across the hearth-rug. "In spite of all that demagogues may say to the contrary, I will uphold that it is the happiest country in Europe; and, as we have seen the most of them, we should be good judges. This is excellent! It reminds me of our return from Egypt. Now then, monsieur,—pardon me, landlord; I forgot I was out of the land of Johnny Crapaud. Ay, landlord, there is something truly British and hospitable in that. Let us have the best dinner you can get ready on the shortest notice; and tell the cooks they need not be very particular, as we have not tasted a decent

dinner since we landed below the castle of Belem in 1809, a few months in Paddy's land excepted. Let it be prepared forthwith, and remember to provide lots of pudding for the ensigns."

After dinner, the inhabitants of the hotel were astounded by the ceremony of piping round the table, a practice which, since dinners had become common with them, the Gordon Highlanders had revived in full force. As soon as the dessert was removed, tall Ronald-dhu, the piper-major, and eight pipers, entered the mess or dining-room, and marched thrice round the table, and then down stairs, blowing with all their force and power the tune usual on the occasion:

> "Our ancient forefaithers agreed wi' the laird,
> To buy a bit grundie to mak' a kail-yaird," &c.

and the reader may imagine the effect of seven and twenty drones of the great Highland war-pipe on English ears, to which, for many reasons, its strains are so discordant.

The hotel was surrounded by a dense crowd, who kept up an incessant cheering, and in the streets the Highlanders were absolutely mobbed. Perhaps it was the first time the Scottish garb had been seen so far south in England, so that, as the London papers said, "the excitement was tremendous."

In every town and village through which they marched on the long route from Dover to Edinburgh, their reception was the same: they were

followed by mobs of shouting men and boys, while laurel boughs, and flags adorned with complimentary mottoes, waved from the houses and church steeples. Every inn or hotel at which the officers dined was decorated with streamers and evergreens, and wreaths of laurel encircled every plate and dish on the tables. Each day, during dinner, they were regaled by a concert of thousands of tongues, shouting and screaming, while the bells in every spire rang as for some great national jubilee.

At Lincoln was erected a triumphal arch, which spanned the highway at the entrance of the city. It was composed of the usual materials—evergreens, and such flowers as could be procured at that season of the year,—and was surmounted by the arms of Scotland, of England, and of the famous old ecclesiastical city, merry Lincoln itself. St. George's red cross was waving from the summit of the ruinous castle, and great Tom of Lincoln was sending forth his tremendous ding-dong, deep, hoarse, and solemn, from the Gothic spire of the cathedral, drowning the mingled din of every other bell in the city. The streets were full of enthusiastic people; the windows were full of faces, flags, and the branches of trees. All were in a state of merriment and uproar, while the shrill fifes and hoarse brattling drums, succeeding the fine brass band, made the streets re-echo with 'the British Grenadiers,' the most inspiriting of all our national quick steps.

Immediately within the triumphal arch stood a carriage filled with ladies, two of whom, very beautiful girls, the perfect personification of young English belles, with the cherry lips, and merry, bright blue eyes of the south, held aloft bouquets of roses, procured probably from some hot-house, for at that season of the year they could not have been reared elsewhere. At the moment the ensigns were passing with the colours, the ladies made some sign to Campbell, who lowered the point of his sword in salute, and desired his orderly bugler to sound a halt. Each of the fair English girls, with a white riband bound her roses to the tops of the colour-poles, just below the spear-heads, but not without blushes and hesitation, for the eyes of thousands were turned upon them, and the hearts of the unshaven ensigns were captured on the instant. The ladies managed to say part of some address prepared for the occasion, "regretting that they had not a wreath of thistles to offer, and requesting that the soldiers would carry the flowers home to their own country."

Campbell returned thanks. The ensigns, who, luckily for the regiment, were both very handsome fellows, bore each on his breast the Waterloo medal. They raised their bonnets, and retired to their places in the centre; the music struck up again, and the Highlanders moved forward with the badge of England adorning the shot-splintered poles of their colours.

Of the latter, nothing was left save the gold tassels and that part of the silk which was stitched round the pole, with a few shreds and remnants of embroidery. The rest had all been shot away, or torn to pieces by the rain and wind, by the battles and storms of twenty-one years of continual warfare, in which the corps had borne a distinguished part, since it had been embodied by the Duchess of Gordon in 1794. The appearance of the bare poles attracted universal attention in every town and hamlet. The people were heard to exclaim with wonder, "Look at the colours! look at the colours!" which perhaps they supposed had been reduced by a single volley to the condition in which they then appeared.

The bouquets of the Lincoln ladies remained long attached to the poles, but the first frosty day completed their destruction, and nothing but the stalks were left; yet these still remained when the regiment, after a march of many hundred miles, came in sight of their native country.

Who can describe the wild delight of the Highlandmen, when, from the hills of Northumberland, they beheld afar off the snow-clad summits of the Cheviots, whose sides have been the scene of so many gallant conflicts? A thousand bonnets rose at once into the air, and the "Hoigh, hurrah!" from a thousand tongues made the welkin ring. What a joyous march had been theirs through all merry England! How different in appearance were its cities, its villages, its vast extent of cultivated land

when compared with the ruined *pueblas* and desolate cities of Portugal, or the barren hills and desert plains of Spanish Estremadura. In the former country the soldiers of Massena had scarcely left one stone standing upon another. What a change to these scenes and places seemed the comforts, the luxuries, the happiness of England, especially to those who had been enduring the starvation, the toil, the yearly, daily, hourly danger and misery of continental service! Truly it was a merry march that from Dover to Scotland, and never did private soldiers trudge with their burden of seventy-five pounds weight more contentedly, than the Gordon Highlanders on that long but happy route.

CHAPTER XIX.

EDINBURGH.

"Edina! Scotia's darling seat,
All hail thy palaces and towers!
Where once, beneath a monarch's feet,
Sat legislation's sovereign powers."

At Musselburgh, on approaching the old Roman bridge, the venerable arches of which have so often rung to the tread of a Scottish host, the Highlanders, as they marched down the brae which ascends to the kirk of Inveresk, perceived that some preparations had been made for their reception by the men of the "honest toon,"—the honourable title conferred by Earl Randolph on that ancient burgh. Between the parapet walls of the bridge, on the spot where once stood an antique barrier gate, a triumphal arch was erected, and on its summit sat a bluff old tar in his tarpaulin hat and frieze coat, bearing aloft the standard of the ancient town of Fisherow, of which he was no bad representative. With a voice, which had grown hoarse and loud in outroaring the waves and blasts of the German ocean, he wel-

comed them in the deep Doric language of Scotia, which had so long been a stranger to their ears.

"The song sings truly, 'There's nae folk like our ain folk,'" said Campbell, as he rode along the bridge at the head of the column. "We are home at last, God be praised! This is our third day's march on Scottish ground. Scotland for ever! Shout, my lads! Three cheers for her people! They seem to vie with the English in giving us a kindly reception."

Their cheers were answered with three-fold heartiness from the other side of the Esk, where the crowd was immense; and the interest and excitement which prevailed may be imagined from the fact, that the whole line of road between the Esk and Edinburgh, a distance of seven miles, was so densely crowded as to be almost impassable; and when the regiment entered the street of Fisherow the cheers and uproar were deafening. The pressure of the people forward was so great, that the march was stopped, the ranks were broken, and the music ceased. Hearty greetings and shakings of hands ensued between men who had never met before, and strapping fish-women, in their picturesque blue jackets and yellow petticoats, were seen clinging round the necks of the soldiers; while a crowd of fishermen and peasantry, every man of them with a bottle in his hand, had hemmed in Campbell against the wall of a house, shouting vociferously, each one, that he must drink with them. The colonel aban-

doned in despair any attempt to proceed, or to urge forward his horse, and sinking back on his saddle, he burst into a hearty roar of laughter at the confused appearance of his men, and the mirth, jollity, and happiness which beamed so radiantly in every face. Stuart was in a similar predicament. The people pressed close around his horse, to every leg of which an urchin was clinging fearlessly, while the rabble shook both hands of the rider without cessation.

After the first wild burst of welcome was over, some order was regained, and the march was resumed; but four hours elapsed before the regiment gained entrance into the High-street of Edinburgh, by crushing through the dense masses which occupied the Abbey-hill and Watergate, where they were again brought almost to a halt. The crowd had followed them in from Musselburgh and increased as it rolled along, and one might have supposed that the entire population of the three Lothians was wedged into the High-street of Edinburgh. Every window of all those lofty houses, which shoot up on both sides of the way, and have been for five centuries a theme of wonder to every traveller, was crowded with eager faces: every lamp-post, every sign-board and door-head bore its load of shouting urchins, and the whole street, from the castle to the palace, was crowded to an excess never before witnessed.

The colonel, who always loved to produce an

effect, had sent forward, a mile or two in advance of the regiment, a young drum-boy, who having lost a leg at Waterloo, had had its place supplied by a wooden one; and the appearance of the little fellow, stumping along in his bonnet and kilt, drew immensely on the sympathy of the women of all ranks, from the ladies of *ton* down to the poor vender of edibles.

"Eh, sirs! Gude guide us! Look at the drummer-laddie! the puir bairn wi' the tree leg!" was the cry on all sides, as the tambour of Waterloo limped along. "Eh! saw ye ever the maik o' that? Oh, wae to the wars, and dule to them that wrocht them! What will his puir mither think at the sicht o' her sodger laddie?"

It was a cunning stroke of policy, sending the mutilated boy forward as an advanced guard. His appearance increased the enthusiasm of the modern Athenians; and when the long line of dark-plumed bonnets appeared above the advancing masses, pressing slowly into the street at the foot of the Canongate, the cries and cheers resembled, as Campbell said, nothing he had ever heard before, except the 'roar of the cannon and musketry at the battle of Alexandria, in Egypt.' So many open mouths, so many arms, heads, hands, and hats in motion at once, presented a very odd appearance, and Stuart, in consequence of being elevated on horseback above the dense masses which crowded the way from wall to wall, had a full view of the whole assemblage,

and thus possessed an advantage over the officers and soldiers who marched on foot. In some places there might be seen a plumed bonnet floating above a sea of heads, where some solitary Highlander, separated far from the rest of his comrades, was struggling in vain to get forward,—a girl, perhaps, hanging around his neck, two men grasping his hands, a third shouldering his musket, while a fourth held a pint-stoup to his mouth, calling upon him to 'drink to the health o' his ain folk.'

In other places appeared the long bayonets, the Lochaber axes and cocked hats of the town guard. That ancient civic corps had been ordered to line the streets, but being completely routed by the pressure of the people, they had abandoned their posts and sought shelter behind the long lines of carriages which were drawn up on each side of the street as closely as they may be seen at a race-course.

Never before had Edinburgh witnessed such enthusiasm, such merriment, noise, laughter, hubbub, such shaking of hands, such pressing, crushing, and tumult, as that with which its hospitable inhabitants welcomed the first-returning regiment of their countrymen; and even Campbell himself—with many regrets that poor Fassifern was not there to share in it—declared that he'd never met with any thing like it, 'even in Egypt!'

To show their respect for their victorious countrymen, even the honest Baillies of Edinburgh, headed

by the Lord Provost, turned out in state to welcome them; and upon this occasion, contrary to their usual wont, they arrived on the ground—almost—in time. The Provost had prepared a set speech, and would have delivered it, probably, if he hadn't been frightened almost out of his wits at the outset, and forgotten it besides. So a bold Baillie, in scarlet robe and beaver, got upon his legs to welcome home the Highlandmen; and it is to be regretted that the only part of his speech which has been preserved consists merely of an apology on behalf of the Provost,—an assertion that all Scotland was well assured 'no a rajment in the haill service had done sae muckle mischief as the ninety-twa during the wars,' and an offer of an unlimited pinch of snuff from a very handsome gold box which the Baillie carried with him, and which the colonel took it for granted contained the freedom of the city at the very least. To all of which Campbell replied in a speech, which to this day may be seen, printed in small capitals, in the *Edinburgh Journal.*

The bows, the sweet smiles, and pretty wreaths of real or artificial flowers which the ladies tossed from the carriages lining the streets, were far more agreeable tokens of admiration than the address of Baillie Mucklewham; and those wounded officers who still bore their arms in slings, found that such honourable badges of war attracted the utmost attention and interest.

Having thus piloted back Ronald Stuart to the

Scottish capital, the place in which his military career began, and having brought him thither safe and sound, wind and limb,—with the rank of major, and a moderate fortune besides, the reader may suppose that his adventures are finished. But pause awhile, dear reader! one or two of the most interesting—to him at least—are yet to come. The regiment halted in the gloomy old quadrangle of the castle, where they were wheeled into line and closely inspected by the commander-in-chief, who complimented Lieutenant-colonel Campbell, in the usual phraseology, on the efficiency and discipline, &c. &c. &c. of the regiment. Campbell replied, that he believed they were in as good trim as when they returned from Egypt, some sixteen years before.

The moment this tedious ceremony was over, Ronald, who had been wishing the whole North British staff at the bottom of the draw-well, found himself seated in the 'Rob Roy' Perth stage, without having doffed his trappings, and with no other encumbrances than his plaid and claymore. In ten minutes Edinburgh, the city of the seven hills, was far behind him, and the stage was bounding along the Queensferry road, past the hills and woods of Corstorphin, as fast as four blood-horses and four flying wheels could bear it. The heart of the gallant young Scot was leaping with feelings of gladness and delight, which none can imagine save those who have experienced the pleasure of returning home after a long and weary absence. Five years had elapsed since

he had travelled that road before, and it seemed a very long time to look back upon. He had seen so many strange scenes, places, and persons in that time, that it seemed like a century.

"Five years ago! Alice was quite a girl then," he repeated to himself. "Ah! Alice will be quite a woman now; but she is my beloved Alice still." At times there flitted across his mind anticipations of something unpleasant occurring, in consequence of his father's obstinate and old-fashioned hostility to the Inchavon family; and he remembered, with peculiar pain, his resentment when his passion for Alice Lisle first became known to him.

It was nearly midnight when he alighted at the George Inn, and he had yet a considerable distance to travel before he should reach Lochisla. Having a stout saddle-horse, he took the road which led to Lochearn, and as he perfectly remembered every by-way and sheep-track, he struck across the mountains, taking a nearer way to Lochisla than the high road; and as there was neither hedge, ditch, wall, or enclosure of any kind, the way was free and open, and he galloped on by beetling craigs, by corrie and rock, over ground from which the most heedless fox-hunter would have recoiled with dismay.

CHAPTER XX.

LOCHISLA.

"They are gone! they are gone! the redoubted, the brave!
The sea breezes lone o'er their relics are sighing;
Dark weeds of oblivion shroud many a grave,
Where the unconquered foes of the Campbell are lying."

The Stuarts of Appin.

The bright moon was shedding her lustre over hill and valley, and the traveller soon saw the mountain Isla gleaming beneath her beams as brightly as ever he had seen the Ebro or the Douro, and he listened with delight to the murmur of its falling waters as they poured over the shelving linn at Corrie-avon, —a fortunate ducking in the pool of which had so suddenly changed the sentiments of Alice's father towards him.

Now he was on the old familiar road to his home. It was long past midnight. "Such a joyful surprise they will have!" said he, communing with himself, "and a merry new year it will be in the glen; but poor old Donald Iverach, he will look in vain for his fair-haired Evan."

The road was closely bordered by pine and birch trees. The latter were bare and leafless, and their

stems and branches gleamed like a fairy shrubbery of silver in the moonlight; but the former, the solemn black pines of Caledonia, remained in all their rough unfading foliage, and cast around them a gloomy horror. Steep rocks, where the bright-eyed eagle and the giant glede looked forth from their eyrie, echoing caves, whilom the residence of wild and wondrous beings, the cairns of long-departed chiefs, rough obelisks, marking the ground of ancient battles and covered with mossy figures grim and terrible, bordered the devious way; but he hailed them all with delight, for they were the well-known haunts of his childhood, and his terror of the mysterious beings that were said to guard them had long since passed away. He set up his old hunting halloo as he galloped along, to hear if they re-echoed as of old, and in his glee he shouted fearlessly into a yawning chasm called the Uamhachoralaich, an uncouth name, which means 'the cavern of the strange spirit.' He hallooed again and again, to hear the voluminous echo which had so often stricken awe and horror into his heart when he was a child; and anon he dashed up the glen, scaring the deer in the thicket and the eagle on the rock, and causing the colleys on the distant hills and moors to hearken and howl in alarm.

Now, Lochisla lay before him! The whole scene burst upon his view at once, as his horse bounded up from the narrow gorge through which the road-way wound. The lonely Highland lake lay sleeping at the

foot of the dark and wooded hills, which descended abruptly on all sides towards it. Tall and spectral on its rock, with one side covered with dark ivy and the other gleaming grey in the moonlight, the tower overhung the loch. Far beyond rose Ben-more, dim and distant. The declining moon was verging towards his ridgy back, behind which it would soon disappear. In the tower, or the clachan beneath it, no light was visible. Every loophole and window was dark.

"They are all a-bed; and the poor old watch-dog must be dead, or I should have heard his honest bark before this," said Ronald aloud, as he rode on towards the gate in the outer wall of the fortalice.

There seemed a stillness, an utter absence of life around him, which occasioned dark forebodings of evil, and he felt a strange sadness sinking on his heart. He longed to hear even the crow of a cock or the bark of a dog, but no sound could he detect, save the hoofs of his horse ringing on the frozen pathway which led from the clachan, or onstead-ing, to the tower. For a moment he became quite breathless with agitation, and clung to the mane of his horse.

"God be praised, there is no scutcheon over the gate!" he exclaimed; "but they lack somewhat of their usual care in leaving it open at this hour."

The gate of the barbican, or outer wall, was lying off its hinges on the earth. Janet's turret was dark. Her light, which she was wont to burn the whole

night, gleamed there no longer, and a deadly terror chilled the heart of Ronald. He trembled, apprehending he knew not what, and for some minutes surveyed the court and keep before he dismounted and approached the door. Every thing was mournfully silent and desolate. Part of the barbican wall had fallen down; the wall-flower had sprung up between the stones; the moss and grass grew upon the cope, in the loop-holes, and between the pavement of the court-yard. The byres and stables were empty, and midnight depredators had torn away the doors and windows; the once noisy dog-kennel was silent, and the ancient tower was dark and desolate. The watch-dog's mansion was untenanted, and his chain lay rusting on the grassy ground.

All was as still as the tomb, and the soul of the soldier died within him. The flagstaff was yet on the mossy battlement, but the halliard waved wide on the wind. The old rusty carron gun was yet peeping through its embrasure, but a tuft of knotted grass hung down from its muzzle.

His heart, which so lately bounded with pleasure, now throbbed with apprehension and fear, for the silence around him seemed oppressive and terrible, when contrasted with the bustle he had witnessed in the capital a few hours before.

He struck with the hilt of his dirk on the door, knocking long and loud, and the building echoed like a huge drum, or some vast tomb. Again and again he knocked, but there was no answer save the

mocking echoes. He attempted to force an entrance, but the door was locked and bolted fast, and he was compelled to retire. He looked up to the key-stone of the arched doorway, but the armorial bearings, of which his father was so proud, the antique crown, and initial letters R. II. R. (ROBERTUS II. REX) were there no longer. The stone remained, but the ancient sculpture was demolished. He muttered some incoherent things, for the memory of the past came swelling up in his breast, and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. He looked across the moonlit lake towards the islet, where the ruins of the church tower cast a long deep shadow on the graves of his martial ancestors, and their once numerous brave and devoted vassals.

It was a time of the deepest mental agony. A century seemed to have elapsed since the morning. His thoughts were all chaos and confusion, save one, which was terrible and distinct enough,—that he stood by the threshold of his father's house, a stranger, a wanderer, and there was no hand to grasp his, no voice to bid him welcome. After lingering long, he turned sorrowfully from the tower, to awaken some of the peasantry at the clachan. On re-passing the ruined gate, he saw, what had before escaped his observation,—a large ticket or board nailed to the grass-grown wall of the barbican. He approached, and by the light of the moon read the following—

"NOTICE.

"Any person or persons found trespassing on the

lands of Rosemount Tower, will be punished with the utmost rigour of the law, by the Proprietor, Zachary Macquabester, Esq., of Rosemount.

"N. B.—Informers will be handsomely rewarded, on applying to Mr. Macquibble, writer, Spy-gate, Perth."

The place swam around him.

"Rosemount Tower! The Proprietor, confound him!" exclaimed Ronald, bursting into fury, "and is it come to this?"

With a heart sick and sore with disappointment, grief, and mortified pride, he descended to the little street of thatched cottages named the Clachan. Here all was silence and desolation too. In some places the roofs had fallen in, and rafters stuck through the thatch, like ribs through the skin of a skeleton: the chimneys had fallen down, and the doors and windows were gone. The hamlet was in ruins. The household fires had been quenched; and as he surveyed the deserted place, he became painfully aware that *his* people—those among whom his race had moved as demi-gods—were gone forth, and that the place of their birth, and which held the bones of their forefathers, knew them no longer.

The glen, which in his boyhood had maintained two hundred men in what seemed ease and competence to a people so primitive, was now desert and waste. The mountains, the wood, and the water were still there, as they had been in the days of Fingal; but the people had passed away, and Ronald

Stuart, to whom the Gaëlic *sobriquet,—Ronald an deigh nam finn,* might now be truly applied, departed slowly and sadly from Lochisla.

He did not weep—he was too tough a soldier for that,—and therefore could not experience the calm feeling of resignation and relief given to an overcharged bosom by a gush of hot, salt tears; but, with a heart bursting with fierce feelings and sad remembrances, he departed from the valley just as the waning moon sank behind the darkening mountains. He rode slowly at first; but anon he drove his sharp spurs into the flanks of his horse, and rode towards Inchavon at break-neck speed, as if he would flee from his own thoughts, and leave his sorrows far behind him. But the first gush of gloom and disappointment having somewhat subsided, he strove to calm his agitated spirit, and he derived some consolation in the timely recollection that, although Lowland innovation might have expatriated the people of Lochisla, his father might yet be alive. Eager to learn some tidings, he galloped along with the speed of the wind, outstripping the gathering storm.

"Ha! here is Inchavon at last! Dear Alice will explain to me all this strange mystery."

Forward he went at a hunting pace, and, keeping his body well back and bridle-hand low, he cleared the wall of the park at a bound, and galloped over the whitening lawn towards the portico, under which he reined up his panting steed. The whole mansion

was involved in silence and darkness; and as he looked upon its closed windows and gloomy façade, new apprehensions and terrors began to arise before him.

He rang the lobby-bell with fury, and waited long, but without receiving an answer. Again and again he rang, yet no one came. He walked round the house, but every window was closed and dark. The stables were shut up, and the vane on the clock-tower creaked dismally. Neither dogs nor fowls appeared about the kitchen offices; not a bat was stirring, and no sign of life was visible anywhere. Ronald thought that he was bewitched, that there was a glamour over him, or that the land had been deserted by its inhabitants.

The chill snow-flakes were descending thick and fast, and he trembled as much with cold as with apprehension. It was quite a relief when a large mastiff dog bounded forth suddenly, to the full extent of his chain, from his kennel in a corner, and barked furiously; and standing erect on his hind legs, yelled till the house and the surrounding plantations echoed far and near to the sound. At that moment a light flashed out upon the snow, and a man, half dressed, appeared at an upper window with a gun in his hand. Ronald was so white with snow, that it was impossible to recognise what or who he was, and consequently his reception was rather rougher than he expected.

"Wha may you be, frien', that come prowlin'

aboot honest men's doors at this time o' the nicht—or mornin' rather, eh?"

"Hah!" exclaimed Ronald, "are you Jock Nevermiss,—roaring Jock the game-keeper?"

"What the better wad ye be for kennin'?" asked the other, cautiously.

"Come, come, Jock; you must remember me, surely? We have had many a merry day's sport together. Is it possible that you do not know me?"

"Possible eneuch, chield. But its ower cauld the nicht to hae ony mair giff-gaff; sae come back i' the morning, and then we'll see what like ye are. I like none o' yer Southland-tongued folk."

Ronald was enraged at the fellow's pertinacity, but his fierce reply was interrupted by the soft voice of a female.

"Gude sake! surely I should ken his voice! O Jock! Jock! what hae ye been sayin'? It's the young captain o' Lochisla. It's maister Ronald Stuart o' the tower—Miss Alice's Joe, come home frae the wars! Haud awa, ye muckle gowk Jock! Oh, I ken ye weel, sir; for many a blithe kiss ye've gi'en me to carry to Miss Alice."

In a twinkling the hall door was opened, and pretty Jessie Cavers, now Mrs. J. Nevermiss, stood palpitating and trembling, with her night-cap on and her feet unshod, by the side of her stout and buirdly helpmate, whose confusion and earnest apologies Ronald at once cut short, for he well knew that honest Jock had been labouring under a mistake,

for the unpleasant effect of which he endeavoured to make amends by a hearty but respectful welcome. Ronald shook the snow-flakes from his dress, and from the ample plumage of his bonnet, as they lighted him through a cold but splendid lobby into the library, where a fire was hastily prepared by the nimble little hands of Jessie.

Ronald experienced another disappointment. Lord Lisle and the family were in Edinburgh, where they always spent the winter season. In his hurry to reach the North, he had quite forgotten that; but he was now informed that they were all "as weel as he could wuss them to be," and Jock, while he stood near the door twirling his bonnet, assured him with a sly look, that Miss Alice "was a bonnier and a grander young leddy noo, and had turned the heads o' hauf the country side. Young Corrieoich, and many mair, were gone clean wud aboot her."

Old Mrs. Kantweel, the housekeeper, next appeared to bid him welcome.

"O sir!" said she, "ye seem sair distressed and unsettled. Ye'll hae been up the glen, whar there are nane noo, alake! to greet ye at your home-comin'."

"Would to Heaven I had been shot at Waterloo, or any where else, rather than have lived till now!" exclaimed he bitterly, flinging away his bonnet and sword, and sinking into a chair. It stung him to the soul to be pitied by servants, however well and kindly they might mean.

"Dinna tak' on sae deeply, sir," continued the matron; "it's sair to bide, but—"

"Enough of this! You mean kindly, Mrs. Kantweel, but I am unused to such consolation," replied Stuart, with that native *hauteur* which he had resumed now that he had again trod upon Highland heather. "I am very sorry for disturbing you all at so untimely an hour; but I request that the whole household will retire to bed, except my old comrade of the muirs, Jock the gamekeeper, with whom I wish to have a few minutes' conversation, after he has seen my nag stabled for the night, or rather the remainder of the morning."

In a few minutes the servants were all in their nests, except Jock, who was invited to seat himself at the opposite side of the library-table, on which Jessie had placed decanters of wine and brandy, with a cold repast, which was, however, left untouched by Ronald.

From Jock he learned the completion of the story of his father's involvement by Macquirk and others, of the sequestration of the effects, the sale of the estate, and of the laird's departure for Canada with his followers; since which nothing had been heard of him. His grief, during the recital, was excessive; but, since fortune had put it in his power to undo all that misfortune had done, he resolved to bear his temporary distress with resignation: it was, too, with a kind of grim satisfaction that he now remembered having caught a momentary glimpse

of a countenance—which it flashed on his mind was that of Æneas Macquirk—pressed against the bars of a loop-hole of the ancient Tolbooth of the Cannongate, on the day the regiment entered Edinburgh so joyously. The worthy Writer having contrived, by his too sharp practice, to secure himself accommodation in the building, and seeing little prospect of release save by the assistance of the finisher of the law, usurped the functions of that personage, and finished himself, by means of a noose of his own tying.

With the first gleam of dawn Ronald quitted Inchavon, rode back to Perth, and returned to Edinburgh as fast as a chaise-and-four could take him; but his spirits were oppressed, and his heart saddened and seared, by the adventures of the preceding night.

CHAPTER XXI.

ALICE.

"Oh! peace to the ashes of those that have bled
For the land where the proud thistle raises its head!
* * * *
Though their lives are extinguished their spirit remains,
And swells in their blood that still runs in our veins;
Still their deathless achievements our ardour awakes,
For the honour and weal of the dear land of cakes."

William Knox.

At night he was again in Edinburgh, the centre of Scottish science, industry, hospitality, eccentricity, and learning; Edinburgh, equally celebrated for the beauty of its ladies, and the most profound cunning of its lawyers.

It was after drum-beat, that is, eight o'clock in the evening, when he arrived at the castle. The place seemed empty and deserted: save the sentinels on the batteries, not a soul was to be seen. The mess-room was dark and silent, a sure sign of something extraordinary, as the officers were stanch votaries of Bacchus, and seldom roosted before twelve. It immediately occurred to Stuart that some great

conflagration, or other cause of disturbance, had happened, and that the magistrates had ordered the regiment into the city. To ascertain the truth, he descended the citadel stairs to the main guard-house, a building situated under the brow of the rock on which the chapel stands, and from the crowning parapet of which Mons Meg overlooks the city and surrounding country.

"Well, Douglas, you seem commandant here," said Ronald to the officer on duty, as he entered.

"How! back already, Stuart? I understood you had leave for six months."

"Never mind; you'll hear all by-and-bye. I hope I may need it yet; but you seem to have the place to yourself, and to be very sulky too. I heard you swearing roundly at the drummer just now."

"The little rascal allowed the fire to go out; and as to being sulky, in truth it would vex an apostle, or Job himself, to be left here in command of this dismal post, when all our fellows are enjoying themselves so famously in the city. Yesterday there was a splendid dinner, a regular banquet given to the sergeants and soldiers by the inhabitants of Edinburgh. It was served up in the assembly-rooms; the great poet, Walter Scott, in the chair, supported by the sergeant-major on his right hand, and grim-visaged Ronald-dhu on the left. A jovial night they had of it! Every cart and other vehicle in Edinburgh was put in requisition to convey our men home, as their legs had somehow failed them. To-

night the entire battalion was marched down to the theatre, free tickets to which have been given to every man, from wing to wing. The officers all went off about an hour ago to a splendid ball, to which they have been invited by the *élite* of Edinburgh. It has been got up on a scale never witnessed here before; our ball at Aranjuez is nothing to it. The first people in Scotland will be there,—beauty, fashion, and all that; while here am I, cooped up in this d—ned guard-room! I have a dozen minds to slip down and mingle with the crowd: Campbell will be too much mystified about Egypt, by this time, to know me, and I believe I might pass unnoticed."

"Very disagreeable, certainly; but not so bad as a wet bivouac on the Sierra de Guadaloupe. Your medal, too; you lose an opportunity of displaying it before some of the brightest eyes in Scotland. But the service—"

"Deuce take the service!" exclaimed the other, pettishly. "If ever I am victimized in this way again, I will sell out, or resign,—upon my honour I will!"

"Alice will be at the ball," thought Ronald, as he returned to his quarters, striding up the citadel stairs, taking three steps at a bound, resolving to attend the assembly-rooms without delay. Notwithstanding the perturbation of his spirits, he was dandy enough to take more than usual care with his toilet, and he found a world of trouble in getting his sash and plaid to hang gracefully, and arranging the

heavy folding of the latter to display the large-studded brooch, four inches in diameter, which fastened it,—a jewel that, from its brightness and size, completely eclipsed his handsome cross of St. James and modest Waterloo medal. Of the two last-named badges he felt not a little vain, a sentiment excusable in so young a man. As a field-officer, he no longer wore the kilt and tasselled purse. For these, the tartan *truis* and gilt spurs were substituted; but they became him not the less, for the tight truis of the Celtic garb display a handsome figure nearly as well as the warlike filleadhbeg.

From the lofty windows of the assembly-rooms a blaze of light was shed across George-street, and fell in broad yellow flakes on the crowd of carriages of every kind, glittering with liveries and harness, and on the upturned faces of a mob of idlers collected around the porches, the piazzas and portico, watching the flitting figures of the dancers as they passed and repassed the curtained windows. Within, every part of the building was gorgeously lighted, and the soft music of the quadrille band, playing the airs then most in vogue, floated along the lofty ceilings and illuminated corridors. Crowds of gentlemen in full dress, or in uniforms, with ladies sparkling with jewels and radiant with beauty, were gliding in every direction to cool themselves after dancing, or to admire the tasteful decorations which met the eye wherever it turned; and conspicuous among these, Ronald, with the greatest delight, beheld the splin-

tered poles and tattered colours which he had so often borne on many a weary march and dangerous occasion.

He looked eagerly around him for Alice, and examined the figure of every lady he passed. Near the door of the hall, where the dancers were, he, almost unconsciously, addressed a lady and gentleman regarding the cause of his anxiety.

"Will you please to tell me if Miss Lisle is here?"

The lady and gentleman smiled, and exchanged glances of surprise.

"Oh, undoubtedly she is," replied the latter. "She is never absent on such a night as this."

"But she never comes till near eleven," added the lady.

Stuart found that he had been saying something foolish, but he bowed with a good grace, and mingled with the crowd to conceal his confusion, for his face was turning as red as his coat.

The appearance of the quadrille parties was splendid. The room was crowded with all that were gay, beautiful, or fashionable in Edinburgh; more than one-half of the gentlemen were in uniform, or in the tartan of their respective clans. The ladies wore a profusion of lofty feathers, and the effect of so many rich costumes was striking and brilliant beyond conception.

Eagerly as Ronald's heart throbbed to meet Alice, he had no intention of getting up a melo-dramatic scene in the ball-room by accosting her abruptly;

he therefore made a reconnoissance of the dancers, keeping aloof, and observing the company in the room from amidst a group of gentlemen who were, as usual in such places, clustered around the door. He felt a light touch upon his arm, and two soft dark eyes were beaming pleasantly and fondly upon his.

"Ah, *señor!* ah, Major Stuart!" said the fair owner with astonishment.

"Hah! Ronald my boy!" added another well-known voice, and his hands were grasped by those of Lisle and his beautiful Spanish wife, who was now a fashionable belle, with nothing of old Castile about her, except her "wild dark eyes," upon which few could look without pleasure and admiration. Her superb figure gave additional beauty to a rich dress of white satin trimmed with the richest lace. A diamond circlet sparkled around her forehead. Virginia had the air of a queen. The time when he had first beheld her, as the half demure, half coquettish Abbess of Santa Cruz, flitted across Ronald's mind; but it seemed more like a dream than a reality. Although on the retired list, Lisle wore his uniform, with his empty sleeve hooked up under the folds of his green plaid, over which hung his medal and Waterloo ribbon.

"How happy I am to see you!" exclaimed Ronald. "I have been looking for you every where amid this gay wilderness of people. And you are all well?"

"As well as you could wish us. Alice is here."

"Would to Heaven I could see her!" said Ronald.

"You shall have your wish instantly," replied Louis. "'Tis a splendid affair, this!"

"Our fellows seem to be quite the lions of the night."

"The ball surpasses even ours in the palace of Aranjuez," observed Louis, glancing fondly at Virginia. "But where is Alice?"

"I saw her but a moment ago," replied the donna, whose accent had become much improved by her residence in Edinburgh. "Oh, how happy, how very happy she will be to see you!"

Ronald's heart beat more joyously than ever, and his impatience increased.

"Your sash hides the cross of dear St. James," continued the fair Castilian. "Show it fully, *amigo;* such a badge sparkles well on the breast of a soldier. Alice will love to look upon it; and so shall I, for it will remind me of brave old Spain. We have had many a long conversation about you, for a year past."

"Lord Lisle is here, of course?"

"In one of the ante-rooms, with Campbell and some of the seniors. But we must discover Alice," said Louis; "she is very angry with her field-officer."

"How have I been so unhappy?"

"The carriage was in the High-street yesterday when the regiment marched in, and for nearly half an hour Alice sat in it, watching you unseen."

"Watching me?"

"Yes."

"Good heavens! I never saw her."

"Your horse was jammed by the crowd within a few yards of us; and there you remained as fast as King Charles's statue close by, and looking in every direction except towards us. Poor Alie was very much agitated; and you kept your back turned upon her, with very happy *nonchalance*, during the whole of the Baillie's speech, and the rest of the foolery performed in front of the Exchange."

"How unfortunate!"

"The moment the crowd had dispersed sufficiently we drove to the castle; but you were off no one knew where, and Alice was sorely displeased."

"I was away to Lochisla," replied Ronald, while his brow became clouded.

The band of the Highlanders commenced at that moment '*el Morillo*,' a well-known Spanish waltz which they had learned abroad.

"Oh, the gay, the graceful waltz! Let me look upon it," said Virginia, bending forward, while her eyes flashed with delight. "Ah! I am dying to have a waltz. 'Tis *el Morillo!*"

"May I have the honour?" said Ronald, taking her hand and leading her forward.

"Stay but a moment—there is Alice."

"Where?—ah! tell me."

"How gracefully she steps! Beautiful! beautiful!"

Stuart looked in vain for the Alice he had known in Perthshire.

"I shall show you afterwards," said the cruel donna. "You will have quite enough of her by-and-by; but we shall be late just now for the waltz." Away they flew into the brilliant maze of the waltzers, Ronald clanking his massive spurs at every turn, in a manner he had acquired among the Spaniards. Notwithstanding his practice among the donnas of Spain, he acquitted himself but indifferently. Imagining that every lady who whirled past in succession might be Alice Lisle, he looked everywhere but to the figure of the dance, and various unpleasant shocks took place, which excessively annoyed the Castilian precision of Virginia.

"Stay, stay!" said she; "I will take pity on you. You are too excited to dance. Let us withdraw, and I will show you your fairy queen."

They left the giddy whirl, and after hanging half breathless on Ronald's arm for a moment, "There is Alice!" said Virginia.

"Where? On my honour! I know her not. I cannot recognise her."

"Heavens! do you not know her when she is before you? Oh, for the eyes of a Spanish cavalier! That is Alice in the spangled dress, with the white ostrich feathers in her hair."

"Waltzing with the tall fellow in the uniform of the Archer Guard—the green and gold," added Louis, who had joined them. "Now they leave the dance.

The archer is young Home of Ravenspur. He has dangled after Alice for three or four weeks, but I will make the fellow quite jealous in three minutes. Retire to one of the lobbies, and I will bring her to you. She does not know that you are here; but there must be no screaming or fainting, or nonsense of that kind. I believe that, whatever she may feel, Alie will conduct herself admirably."

"For three winters past Alice has been the reigning belle in Edinburgh," said Virginia as she led forth Ronald, who had become considerably bewildered. "She is never absent from a single *fête*, assembly, or promenade; and indeed you have great reason to be proud of her, for she causes more envy among the women, and admiration among the men, than ever woman did before."

"Indeed—indeed!" murmured Ronald, scarcely knowing what he said, for Virginia's information gave him little satisfaction. He had no objection that Alice should be a belle, but he should be grieved to find her a coquette. The merry laughing Alice of Inchavon woods and braes, the slender girl of seventeen, with her curls flowing wide and free, had become a stately young lady of two-and-twenty, with her hair braided and tortured by a fashionable dresser, surmounted by a floating plume of feathers. Her cheek was paler, and the bloom of rustic health had given place to the graceful air of a young lady of *ton*. Her form was taller and rounder, and—

"Here she comes!" said Virginia, cutting short

Ronald's reflections. He became agitated and confused when he saw Louis approaching with a lady in a bright dress leaning on his arm. "She is more beautiful and more devoted to you than ever; so, *amigo*, take courage," said Virginia, pressing his hand. "She knows nothing of what I saw in the convent of Jarciejo, and never shall. Believe me, Ronald, her heart has never in the slightest thought wandered from its love to you."

"Alice! dearest Alice!" said Ronald, springing forward, and throwing an arm around her, while she sank upon his breast, too much agitated to speak. But immediately she disengaged herself, and a deep blush suffused her face and neck, rendering her beauty still more striking. Timidly and hurriedly she looked around, to see whether others than her brother and Virginia had observed this scene.

"Be brave, Alie!" said Louis; "there are none here but friends."

"Pho—such a bashful couple!" exclaimed Virginia. "What! not a single kiss to give and exchange, after being separate so long?"

"Ronald, love!" faltered Alice, trembling violently, while she tendered her flushed cheek. He then drew her arm through his, and led her towards some of the cool passages, that she might recover from her agitation, and that the tumult of her spirits might pass away. How supreme was their delight! Every thing and every one were forgotten in the rapture of that meeting, and there were two hearts,

pure and happy—wondrously happy, in the midst of all that gay and dissipated crowd.

"How delighted dear papa will be to see you!" said Alice, after the first outpouring of their joy and affection had subsided,—an affection which had surmounted all the perils of a long separation, the temptations of the gay world, and the dangers of a furious war. They had not looked upon each other's faces for five years—years of grief, doubt, and anxiety; and now, how happy! to find themselves united again, never to separate while on earth. "How happy papa will be to see you!"

"Not more than I shall be to see him, Alice."

"Papa is here somewhere. I saw him only ten minutes ago, with that Celtic goliath your colonel. They will be looking at the dancers."

"You must dance the next quadrille with me, Alice?"

"I am engaged a dozen deep. I am engaged for every dance the night before a ball; and that goose in green, young Home,—heavens! what shall I do?"

"Dance with me, and apologize. I am determined to keep you for the remainder of the night, in spite of Home and all these holiday guardsmen;" and he led her towards the dancers.

How many old and fond recollections were awakened by the sound of her gentle voice! Ronald hung with the purest delight upon every word she uttered. With the same emotions Alice listened to

him, wondering that the slender youth whose fair unshaven cheek had been so often pressed to her own, had become the perfect model of a soldier,—stout and well-knit in figure, accustomed to his arms and harness, and rendered swarth in visage by continued exposure to a continental sun. They felt an honest pride in each other as they moved through the crowded rooms, and many eyes followed them; for the badges sparkling on Ronald's breast, and a slight scar on his sunburned face, declared that he had acquitted himself well in the field, while Alice was the leading star, the reigning queen, of the fashionable world in Edinburgh.

Ronald's welcome by the old lord was as hearty and kind as he could have wished. He introduced him to Mr. (afterwards Sir Walter) Scott, to Jeffrey, Christopher North, and some other leading characters, who were assembled in one of the ante-rooms. The striking figure of Christopher, with his lank hair hanging over his shoulders like a water-god's, attracted his attention particularly. Campbell was seated in a snug arm-chair, and was detailing sundry anecdotes of Sir Ralph to Scott, who listened to his prosing with his usual politeness and good nature. Except in a foursome reel, Campbell had not been dancing that night. For all fashionable measures he entertained a supreme contempt; the strathspey, or the sword dance, was his delight and his forte. At the other end of the supper-table, ladling hot punch, sat the celebrated Johnnie Clerk (Lord Eldin,) to

whom Lisle introduced Stuart, who was rather surprised by the oddity of his language and observations.

On his saying something complimentary about the society of Edinburgh, Johnnie replied, "The lassies were weel aneuch; but as for the society, it's no just as it was in my young days, when I first soopit the parliament-house wi' the tails o' my goon."

"How so?" asked Scott.

"Because Edinburgh is just like a muckle kail-pot,—a' the scum is coming to the top."

Lord Lisle, Scott and Christopher, Johnnie Clerk and Campbell, had been sitting beside the decanters for some time, and had contrived to get considerably merry. As usual, Scott was the life of the party, and none enjoyed more than he did the queer stories told him by Campbell about the Highlanders, the adventure with old Mahommed Djedda, the march to Grand Cairo, the campaign in Corsica, and Heaven knows all what more.

Stuart, with Alice, returned to the ball-room, where they danced together nearly the remainder of the night; Alice braving the displeasure of certain beaux, who, although they were sorely displeased at being jilted, were too well bred, or perhaps too wary, to take any unpleasant notice of it. Meanwhile, the little party in the ante-room became quite convivial, and Campbell, in the midst of his glee, proposed to give the company a song. This

offer being applauded, he commenced at once, while Clerk beat time with his ladle and bowl.

"When Abercrombie, gallant Scot!
Made Britain's foes to tack again,
To fight by him it was my lot;
But now I'm safe come back again."

With a brimming glass in one hand, and a decanter of sherry in the other, he sung the nine verses of this patriotic song in a style peculiarly his own, but as loud as it was out of place; and Ronald, when dancing in the ball-room, heard the tones of his stentorian voice above even the music of the band. The colonel insisted upon Scott singing in turn, although he protested that he was no singer. However, as it was usual in such cases, he gave them a few staves of the old ditty, "Tarry woo," his only song, and one which he very much admired for its old style of verse and quaintness of expression. More songs succeeded, and they enjoyed themselves as much as men could do amid good company and good wine. Christopher at last set the example of speech-making, because it was an art in which he particularly excelled: he proposed "The health of Major Stuart, the hero of Almarez, &c."

Doctor Stuart returned thanks in the name of his clansmen; but the wine having slightly obscured his perceptions, his speech, somehow, went off into a dissertation upon gun-shot wounds, and the treatment of fractures, simple and compound.

It was five in the morning before this splendid

fête concluded. How many head-aches or heart-aches ensued next day, and how many loves were lost and won, has nothing to do with my story; but several gentlemen flirts—the tall archer especially—went home breathing war and defiance, hair-triggers and rifle-balls, against Stuart, who was too much of a soldier to value their resentment a rush, although he received some distant hints of it.

Other balls and gaieties succeeded, and during the whole of that happy winter the officers of the Highlanders were the lions of Edinburgh. The 78th, the brave Ross-shire Buffs, who arrived soon after, came in for a share of the general attention and festivities. The mess-room tables were covered every morning with invitation cards. The young ladies had all caught the scarlet fever, and would certainly have pulled each other's caps had they worn any; and even the match-making mammas had work enough upon their hands, and were half worried to death—as they deserved.

CHAPTER XXII.

NEWS FROM AFAR.

MEANWHILE, the arrangements for the marriage of a certain lady and gentleman were proceeding in the most agreeable manner imaginable, and the ceremony was only delayed until some definite information could be procured concerning the fate of the old laird and his followers. Even *the* day was fixed; for three months had elapsed, and no tidings had been heard from Canada.

The Glasgow manufacturer who had purchased Lochisla, established a splendid household and equipage in Edinburgh. By the marriage of one of his daughters with some retired naval captain, who, like most naval captains, was not very particular in his taste, the Macquabester family continued to squeeze themselves into the assembly-rooms now and then, and to give large routes at home, where they carried on—as the saying is—'at hack and manger;' and, one way and another, the poor man squandered away his hard-earned thousands, the

gains of many a long industrious year, so successfully, that in a short time he was compelled to betake himself to the loom, while his property was pounced upon ravenously by his creditors. His affairs were managed by Messrs. Diddle and Fleece, clerks to the signet, and they transacted matters so effectually, that Macquabester was soon without a stiver, and his creditors did not find themselves "muckle the better" either. Under its new name of Rosemount, Lochisla was advertised for sale, at a small upset price, and all applications were to be made to Messrs. Diddle and Fleece, at their office in Queen-street. Fifty thousand pounds was the sum required; and Ronald, when he read the advertisement one morning in the mess-room, resolved to become the purchaser, but knew not where to raise the money. While revolving the matter in his mind, without being able to form any definite plan, a servant brought a note from Lord Lisle, requesting to see him immediately. After a consultation with Alice's father, Ronald found himself able to treat with Messrs. Diddle and Fleece, on whom he called in the forenoon at their chambers; and he found them, there being money in the way, the most smooth-faced, obsequious, and polite men of the quill that Edinburgh possessed. After a delay of some weeks, and a mighty deal of fuss, burrowing and searching among the musty records of the Register-house, and after all sort of doubts, difficulties, delays, replies and duplies, duplicates and repetitions, amplifica-

tions and expenses had been disinterred or created, brought forward and demolished, the affair was settled, and Stuart found Lochisla his own.

One forenoon he sat in the front drawing-room of Lisle's house, lounging on a very comfortable sofa, and occupied in detailing some of his Peninsular adventures to a bright circle of six young ladies, whose fair fingers were plying the needle, with great assiduity, at two large pieces of yellow silk. Several handsome work-baskets lay on the floor, filled with embroidery, gold fringe, silver thistles, letters for battle and achievement, and above all a sphinx, weighty and large enough to please even Campbell, the colonel. The end of the drawing-room, at which the fair workers sat, was covered with shreds and patches like the floor of a milliner's shop. Alice and five of her most intimate companions were busy working a new pair of colours for the Highlanders; and the rolls of silk, upon which the ladies were embroidering, spread from the knee of one to another like some great piece of ancient tapestry. The ladies were all fair and of noble birth, and Master Ronald, who lay with so much Spanish *nonchalance* on the sofa, had the happiness to act as their director; and as the damsels were all anxious to attract the attention of the handsome officer, although they knew him to be engaged to their friend, they were continually asking him questions, where such a badge, such a motto, or the name of such a battle should be placed.

A chubby little rogue, with fair hair and merry hazel eyes, who bore the name of Ronald Lisle, was clambering at his namesake's back, and twisting his curly black locks with dimpled little hands, and crowing and laughing aloud to Alice and the ladies, with whom he was "an angel, a sweet pet, a dear love," &c. &c. He was the very picture of a plump little Cupid; and the ladies bestowed so many kisses and caresses upon him, that Ronald became quite envious, and told the fair givers so.

He was just in the middle of a very animated detail of his adventures with Cifuentes in the wood of La Nava, when the shrill blast of the well-known war-pipe made him stop so suddenly in his narrative, that all the girls looked up with surprise, for the pipe may be heard at all times in every part of Edinburgh.

The performer came nearer and nearer, and the notes of his instrument were making the great square, the lofty dome and portico of St. George's,—even the very sky, ring to the warlike blast. It was a great Highland pipe, of the largest size, and Ronald's blood came and went in his changing face while he listened.

"That is the 'Prince's Lament!'" said he.

"Surely I have heard that pipe and tune before," said Alice, throwing aside the standard and her needle, and going to a window. She uttered an exclamation of surprise, and started back.

"'Tis either Donald Iverach or the devil!" cried Ronald impetuously, as he sprung to her side.

"It is indeed poor old Iverach!" replied Alice, piteously.

"My father's piper a beggar in the streets of Edinburgh!—a mendicant in his old age!" muttered Ronald through his clenched teeth, striking the floor with his heel till a spur tore the carpet, while the ladies crowded round him with timidity and astonishment. "What cursed misfortune can have brought this about!"

"Dear Ronald! be composed a little," said Alice, taking his hands within her own; "you *must* obey me just now, and I will obey you by-and-by. I will desire Iverach to be looked after." She rang the bell violently.

The piper was now in front of the house. He stood at the curb-stone and paused a moment,—supposing, probably, that he should not play long in vain before so splendid a mansion. He was clad in the royal tartan; having come of a broken clan, he had always worn the family colours of the house under which his ancestors had been vassals. His kilt, plaid, and coat were worn to rags, and the once bright scarlet checks of the tartan were faded and dark; yet the dirk and claymore were swinging as of old at his nut-brown thigh. He was pale and wan, and evidently broken down with age, want, and sorrow. His silvery hairs were almost destitute

of covering, and his feet were in the same condition. The proud expression of his eye was gone: he rarely raised it from the pavement, and when a coin was thrown from a window or the hand of a passer-by, his cheek grew red, and he picked up the gift with such confusion, that he forgot to thank the donor.

"Oh, Alice!" groaned Stuart; "now indeed I know that my father is no more. Death alone could separate Iverach from him; but I have long been prepared to expect the worst. Let some one take care of the old man, and bring him here."

While he was speaking, the piper was ushered in and stood near the door, bowing, bonnet in hand, to the ladies successively, with that native dignity and pride, mingled with respect, which a Highlander never, under any circumstances, loses. He bowed profoundly to Ronald, and his keen eyes wandered restlessly over his uniform. Then, as if some sudden recollection flashed upon his mind, the *piob mhor* fell from his grasp; he sprang forward, and bursting into tears, clasped Stuart round the neck.

"It's my ain pairn! It's Maister Ronald! Oich! oich! Got tam! I'm creetin' mair like a bit giglet o' a lassie, than a teuch auld carle that's come through sae muckle! Gude pe thankit we hae met at last, Maister Ronald! I have been wandering to meet ye through many a queer place; but sair and sad are the news I hae to tell ye,—sad and sair indeed! So joost prepare yersel for the warst!"

"I suppose you would speak of my father?" said Ronald with a quivering lip.

"Aich, ay! ta laird, ta laird! Aich, ay! Got pless us!" replied the vassal, bursting again into tears, which he endeavoured in vain to hide by burying his head in the folds of his tattered plaid; while Stuart half reclined on Alice's shoulder, and turned aside, deeply touched with the old man's sorrow,—for grief, like joy, is infectious. "Ay; I wad speak o' the laird, puir man! an' prood he wad hae peen to see his only son coming home frae the wars an' devildoms a stoot an' handsome chield, wi' a proon face, and a hand hardened wi' the hilt o' the proad-sword. But, *ochone-aree!* he's low aneuch the day, an' mony a pretty man tat followed him far awa' ower the wide and trackless seas to the stranger's cauld an' meeserable country!"

"Poor, dear old man!" said Alice, while she pressed Ronald's hand to compose him, as the piper was speaking.

"I have sad news to tell you, too, Iverach," said he. "Poor Evan Bean,—Evan with the fair hair, is no more! I find this is to be a sorrowful meeting, Donald; for I have lost my father, and you your only son."

The old man smote himself on the forehead, and reeled back giddily as if struck by a blow; but he almost immediately recovered. He stared wildly at the speaker for a moment, and then said, with strange calmness,

"I never again expeckit to pehauld him, for auld Shanet tauld me his weird; and Shanet never spoke in vain, nor tauld an untrue tale. Her father was a *taischatr*. She said he wad return nae mair,—that he was doomed! The words were hard to pelieve; put I mourned for him then as one that was deid and awa'. Oich! I thought the pang was ower. Put—put, O Maister Ronald! my puir Evan,—and whar was he killed?"

"At Toulouse, Donald—at Toulouse, where we gained a signal victory over France. He died bravely, like his comrades, for all were brave alike: I laid him with my own hands in the church-yard of Muret. But for pity's sake, Donald, tell me of my father, and the fate of the Lochisla people, and then I will tell you more of your son, who, as a token of remembrance, has sent you the clasp which fastened the green feather of his bonnet. Miss Lisle will give it when you are more composed. Come; take courage, Donald, and tell us your story. There are none here but old friends, who have often danced to the sound of your pipes, and shall yet again,—ay, next month, and in the old hall of Lochisla too!"

Alice blushed, and her companions smiled. The old man's eyes flashed a red light through their tears. He looked from one fair face to another, and, as he read nothing but innocence and happiness in them all, he smiled, and appeared to become happy too. After being comforted with a few mouthfuls of mountain-dew, filled from a decanter into an

ancient quaigh that he carried, and from which he drank every thing, he became quite composed, and commenced his story.

After leaving the Clyde, the vessel containing the emigrants encountered a continuance of adverse winds, and was driven from her course far to the northward of the Canadas, upon the coast of Newfoundland,—the most barbarous and desolate of all the British colonies. Having lost their rudder, and had their compass washed overboard in a gale, the vessel was, while surrounded by a dense fog, carried into Baboul Bay, or, as it is commonly called, the Bay of Bulls, by the strong current which there runs in shore. Finding that the brig was drifting among the breakers, and that she was quite unmanageable, the master ordered out the boats to tow her off, but the order was given too late. The boats were swamped among the surf, and a few moments afterwards the vessel grounded on a reef, where the boiling sea made clean breaches over her every instant. She heeled over on her beam-ends, and the fore-mast went away by the board, carrying with it the maintop-mast and all the rigging above the top. The vessel thus became a total wreck in five minutes.

"At the time the ship struck," continued the piper, "the laird was lying sick in the cabin, unco unwell in mind and body, for he had lang been pining awa' wi' dule and sorrow for leaving you, and the heathery hills o' Albyn, and to find himsel so far awa' frae

his tower and glen, and the graves o' his kindred and forbears. When I found that a' was ower, I determined to save him or to dee wi' him. Drawing our dirks, and vowing we would slay to the death ony man that opposed us, Alpin Oig and mysel rushed into the cabin, and bore him therefrae in our arms upon the deck, and frae there into a boat, the last ane that was left. The sailors tried to crowd in, but our bare blades keepit them off. Nae man, woman, or bairn frae Lochisla, though death was staring them in the face, wad hae thocht their ain lives worth savin' if the laird's was lost; and sae a' helpit us into the boat, where we solemnly swore, on the blades of our dirks, to return and take as many frae the wreck as we could, and a line was thrown us to make fast to the shore. The laird lay as if he was dead at the bottom o' the boat, wi' naething on but his dressing-gown, and the saut sea pouring like rain ower him. Ochone! it was an awsome time for me! Puir gentleman! he was helpless as a wean in our hands."

Owing to the denseness of the fog there was no shore to be seen but the beach; or what they supposed to be the beach could be discerned through the unnatural mid-day gloom by the white foam of the breakers, towards which the two brave and determined Celts, who had never been on rougher water than the loch of the Isla, urged their frail bark with all the strength of bending oars and muscular arms. They soon lost sight of the water-

logged wreck, which the fog enveloped like a shroud; but the shrieks and prayers of those on board were heard ringing above the roar of the wrathful breakers, which hurl their crested heads with such tremendous fury on the desert beach of Baboul Bay.

When within a few feet of the shore, their attention was arrested by a loud splitting sound, a crash as if a mighty oak was rending asunder, and a tremendous cry rose from the face of the waters to heaven. They looked back in dismay. The sea was covered with pieces of the floating wreck, and human heads and hands appeared at times above the white surf, beneath which they were all engulphed in succession. At the same moment nearly that the ship went to pieces, a wave like a mountain rolled against the stern of the boat, with a shock like that of an earthquake. Iverach was stunned by its weight and fury; the light seemed to go out from his eyes, and he heard a horrible hissing in his ears, as he sank into the abyss,—the trough of the sea. Darkness was around him, and agony was in his heart, as he groped about in the sinking boat. He was grasped convulsively in the strong arms of his terrified companion, and down they went together,—down, down, he knew not how deep, for he became senseless, and could feel no more.

When life returned, he found himself lying upon the beach, drenched with the bitter surf, and covered with shells and sea-weed. It was evening, and the sun, setting behind the hills, cast a long line of ra-

diance across the glassy sea. All traces of the brig, save those that lay scattered on the shore, had disappeared. Corpses were strewed upon the sand,—the cold and wet remains of men, women, and children, once the poor but happy cottiers of Lochisla.

Night was closing around him; he was alone, upon the desert shore of a strange country, and the heart of the aged and superstitious Highlander died away as he looked around him. In front lay the hateful sea, which had destroyed his companions, and behind was a homeless, howling wilderness, a savage solitude, which he shuddered to look upon. He saw every where rocks, mountains, bogs, and thickets of stunted firs, which grew to the very edge of the cliffs and overhung the water; but there were no signs of any human habitation, and he strained his eyes until they grew stiff in the sockets watching the vast wilderness to the westward,—yet no wreath of smoke rose from it. Save the whistle and whir of the plover and curlew, or the splash of the seals that were sporting and floating among the shattered ruins of an iceberg, no signs of life manifested themselves around him.

Donald gazed at the last-named animals with awe, not unmingled with fear, when they rose from the water and looked steadily at him with their great black eyes. The Highlanders used to consider these animals enchanted beings, and some old and troublesome legends of the Ebudæ came thronging upon Donald's mind as he watched their movements

among the ice. Beside him lay the unconscious remains of his leader; but he was joyful rather than grieved to find that he was dead, for he knew that he was now in a better place, and that all his troubles were at an end. To have lived, would only have been a continuance of misery, and Donald upbraided the sea for having spared himself.

He sat on the point of a rock, at the foot of which rolled the surf, and he watched its advance and retreat, careless of whether he died or lived, until night descended on the sea and land, and then his northern superstitions began to prove more terrible enemies than any he had yet encountered. At last it became quite dark, and he knelt down by the corse of the laird to pray; but when, by the light of the stars, he beheld the bleached and ghastly face of the dead man, a sudden and unaccountable terror seized him, and he fled from the sea-shore into the wilderness, where he could no longer hear the dull boom of the ocean, as its eternal waves came rolling on in monotonous succession on the lonely beach.

At sunrise he again sought the shore, and, digging a grave with his weapon, gently placed the body of Mr. Stuart in the earth, rolling it first in his plaid and a piece of old sail-cloth. He covered the grave with the greenest sods he could find, and toiled the whole day, carrying stones from the shore to pile a cairn above it, and on its summit he placed a rough wooden crucifix; for old Iverach had more

of the Catholic than the Protestant in his creed, and he looked upon the cross with reverence and awe. Having performed this last sad duty to the man whom, since they were boys, he had revered and loved with all the devotion of a Highland vassal, he sat down by the grave, and, regardless of his fate, heeded not a ship which was rounding a point of land, and hove in sight about four miles off. But the appearance of other things roused him from this state of apathy. His eye fell upon a gold signet ring which had fallen from the hand of Mr. Stuart, and lay on the turf beside a splendidly-jewelled dirk, which he was wont to wear on the 19th of August,* and other days which are considered gay anniversaries in the Highlands. There was likewise an antique iron casket, containing family relics, bracelets, rings, lockets, and brooches; and the piper resolved that he would return to his own country, if God spared and protected him, that he might place these trinkets in the hands of Ronald Stuart or Miss Lisle, with whom he knew they would be in safe keeping.

With this intention he quitted the beach, ascended a promontory, and made signals to the ship; but they were unseen, and he toiled along the shore from one headland to another, clambering ocean-cliffs, tearing asunder thicket and jungle, till his strength began to fail, and darkness again descended and he could see the ship no longer.

* The raising of Prince Charles's standard, &c. &c.

As a last resort, by means of the hard flinty stones, with which the island abounds, being the only crop it ever produces, he struck a light, and raised a beacon-fire on a rocky peak. Piling drift-wood, fallen trees, and turpentine branches upon it, he raised a giant flame, which lighted the sea and land for miles around, revealing the caverns in the far-off capes and headlands, the barren hills and rocks, the rippling ocean, and the distant sail, which glimmered white and wavering.

This scheme succeeded. A boat was despatched to ascertain the meaning of this strange illumination, and the vessel, which proved to be a Quebec ship bound for Saint John's, the capital of the island, took Iverach on board. He was treated with the utmost kindness by the crew, and was carried to the town of Saint John's, whence he procured a passage in a Greenock ship,—disposing of his brooch, pistols, and some other appointments with which the Highlanders are so fond of adorning their garb, to defray his expenses.

After his return he visited Lochisla, and then traversed the west country for some time, till a recruiting sergeant of the Gordon Highlanders informed him that the regiment had returned to Scotland; upon which he set out on his way to meet them, and having that morning entered Edinburgh, he had screwed up his pipes in Charlotte Square to play for a breakfast, for he had tasted nothing that day.

As he concluded his narrative, he unstrapped a

leather *dorlach*, which he carried on his back, and taking from it the iron casket, the signet ring and the jewelled poniard, placed them in Ronald's hand, glad to be rid of them, after having brought them so far and preserved them as sacred relics, even when compelled by poverty to seek shelter in the haunts of infamy and crime, where he had preserved them untouched, though nearly perishing of want.

He had often been totally without food for four or five days, while at the same time he carried about him jewels worth four hundred pounds.

"But they werna my ain," said he; "and what could I do, though hunger is hard to thole? But a's past noo, and oich! I'll be happy yet, even in my auld and childless days; and I will end them beneath the roof-tree o' the auld tower whan the time comes, and come it must, some day sune,—oich! oich!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

"We dinna ken what was intended,—
We may be for this o't were born;
And now, folk, my song maun be ended,
For I'm to be married the morn."

Edward Polin.

Ronald's grief at the intelligence so suddenly brought him by Iverach was of long continuance. It was the more poignant, because his father had found his tomb in a desert place and in a strange country; for it is ever the wish of a Highlander to be buried among the ashes of his ancestors. When he looked upon the blade of the poniard Donald had brought home, and saw with the thistle —the badge of his family and clan—the motto *Omne solum forti patria,* it recalled the memory of his father's pride and wrath when his boyish passion for Alice Lisle was first revealed to him, and of that moment of anger when he ordered him to quit his presence, and for ever.

The sight of the family jewels which Iverach,

like a pilgrim of old, had so sacredly preserved in all his wanderings, awakened many deep regrets and dear associations. There were lockets which contained the hair of his father and mother interwoven, cut from their brows in youth, when their ringlets were glossy and brown; and there were brooches which had clasped the plaids of brothers, and rings and bracelets which had once adorned the white hands of sisters, all of whom were now gone, and above whose graves the grass had grown and withered for years.

Despite the romance-like appearance the procedure will bestow upon the story, we may not bid adieu to the hero in the midst of his grief, but must leave him what is styled, in common phraseology, "the happiest of men." After a lapse of time his sorrow passed away, and the preparations for his marriage were renewed.

On the forenoon of the 16th of July,—one must be particular on such an occasion,—an unusual bustle was apparent in and about Lord Lisle's mansion in Charlotte Square, one side of which was lined by carriages, while a crowd of women and children were collected around the door. Boys were clinging to rails and lamp-posts, and cheering and yelling with might and main, in a manner which would better have become a wedding in a country village than in the "modern Athens." The servants were all smiles and white ribbons, and clad in their gayest apparel. A flag was flying on the top of the house,

and, at Campbell's particular request, the great stone sphynxes, which overlook the sides of the square, were adorned with coronets and garlands of flowers on this auspicious occasion. St. George's bells rang merrily, and the splendid band of the Highlanders were making the northern gardens of the square re-echo, as they played the old Scottish air, "Fy! let us a' to the bridal!" while the crowd sang and laughed, and the rabble of boys cheered long and lustily, like a nuisance as they were.

Ladies and gentlemen in full dress appeared at times at the windows of the front drawing-room, but they immediately retired when a shout arose from the gaping crowd, among whom the servants scattered basketsful of white favours. To these Allan Warristoun added, now and then, a shower of red-hot penny-pieces, which he heated on a shovel, and threw over the area railings. These burned the fingers of those who caught them; the laughter became mingled with screams, and "the fun grew fast and furious."

Drawn by four fine bays at a trot, a smart new travelling-carriage fresh from the finishing hands of Crichton, came up to the door, and the people fell back on the right and left; but again rushed forward as the door was opened, and the clanking steps thrown down by the servant, who, like the smart postilions on the saddle, wore a white favour of giant size on his breast. On the dickey sat our friend old Donald Iverach, superbly garbed and

armed, with his pipes under his arm, and his bonnet cocked over his grey hairs; while he screwed away at his drones, and looked more happy than ever he had done in his life.

Double imperials, all new and shining, were strapped on the top of the carriage, and a regimental bonnet-case surmounted them both. A sword and shoulder-belt, with various guns and fishing-rods, hung in the slings behind, while shooting-bags and band-boxes were piled up in the rumble, into which the servant handed a spruce little maid, cloaked and bonneted for the road.

Encircled by the collar of Saint James of Spain, the arms of Stuart and Lisle quarterly, appeared blazoned on the panels, glittering on the harness, on the carriage top, and sparkling on the ample buttons of the footman.

"Now then, John; is all right?" cried the jovial butler, appearing at the front door.

"All right, sir!" cried the postilion; and the crowd began to cheer.

Stuart came forth, with Alice leaning on his arm, and the eyes that peeped in at the door discerned a crowd of glittering dresses and happy faces behind them. Ronald was in full dress, and certainly appeared a little nervous. Alice leant on his arm, trembling and blushing desperately, but looking so pretty in her little marriage bonnet, and so interesting in all the splendour of white satin, orange-buds, virgin-lace, smiles and blushes, that the crowd in

their admiration forgot to cheer, greatly to her relief. Ronald handed her into the carriage, and sprang in after her. Up went the steps, and the door was closed.

"Good bye! God bless you, my lad!" cried Campbell, flinging an old shoe after them for luck. "Remember the old Gordon Highlanders; for it will be long before they forget you!"

"Good bye, colonel!" said Ronald. "Say the same for me to all the rest of ours."

"Adieu!" faltered Alice, kissing her little hand, and the glasses were drawn up. John leaped into his seat behind, and placed his arm round the waist of the maid-servant. Donald cried "Hoigh!" and waved his bonnet; the pipes struck up; "crack went the whip, round went the wheels," and they were off at the rate of twelve miles an hour for Lochisla.

THE END.

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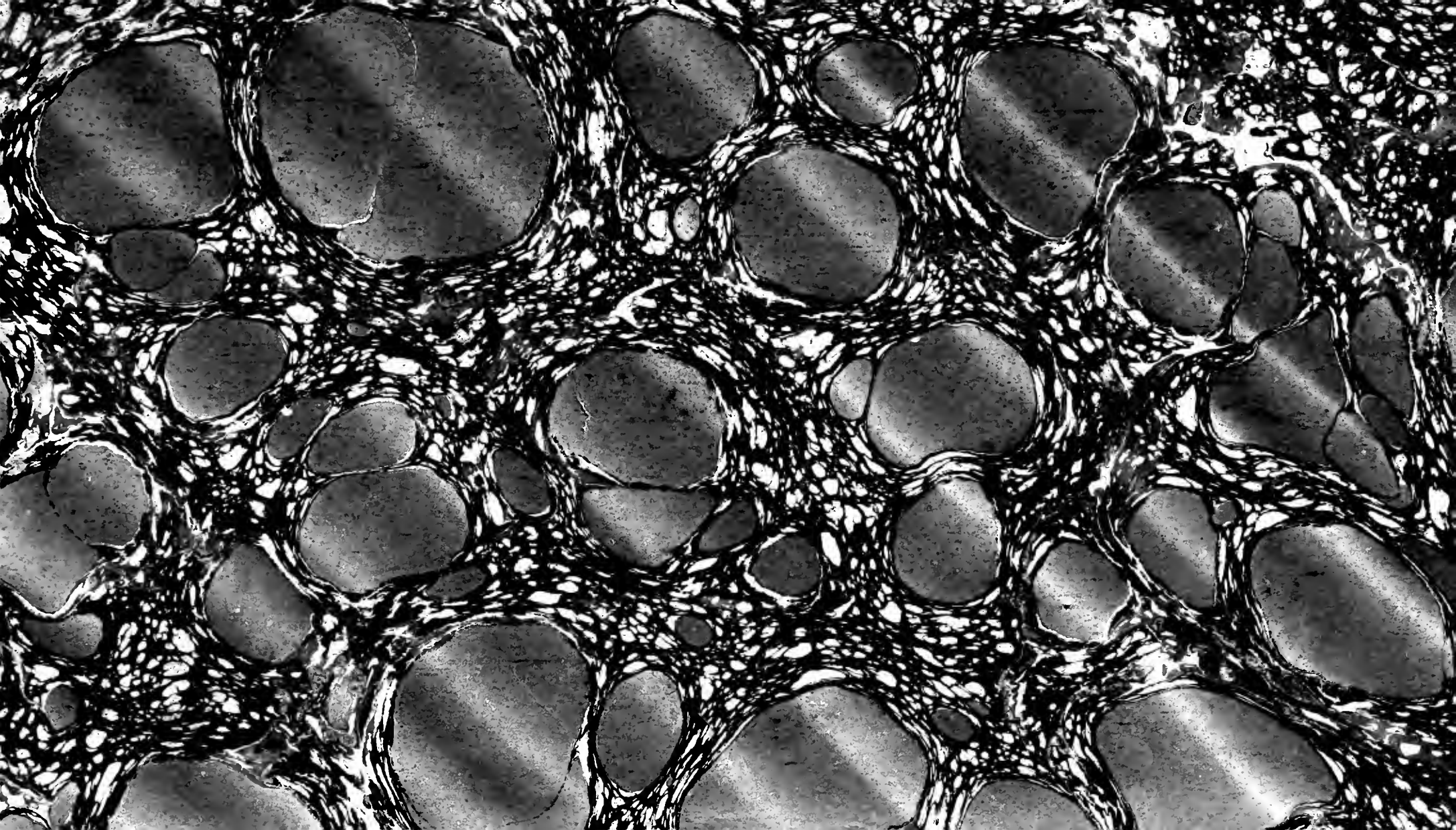

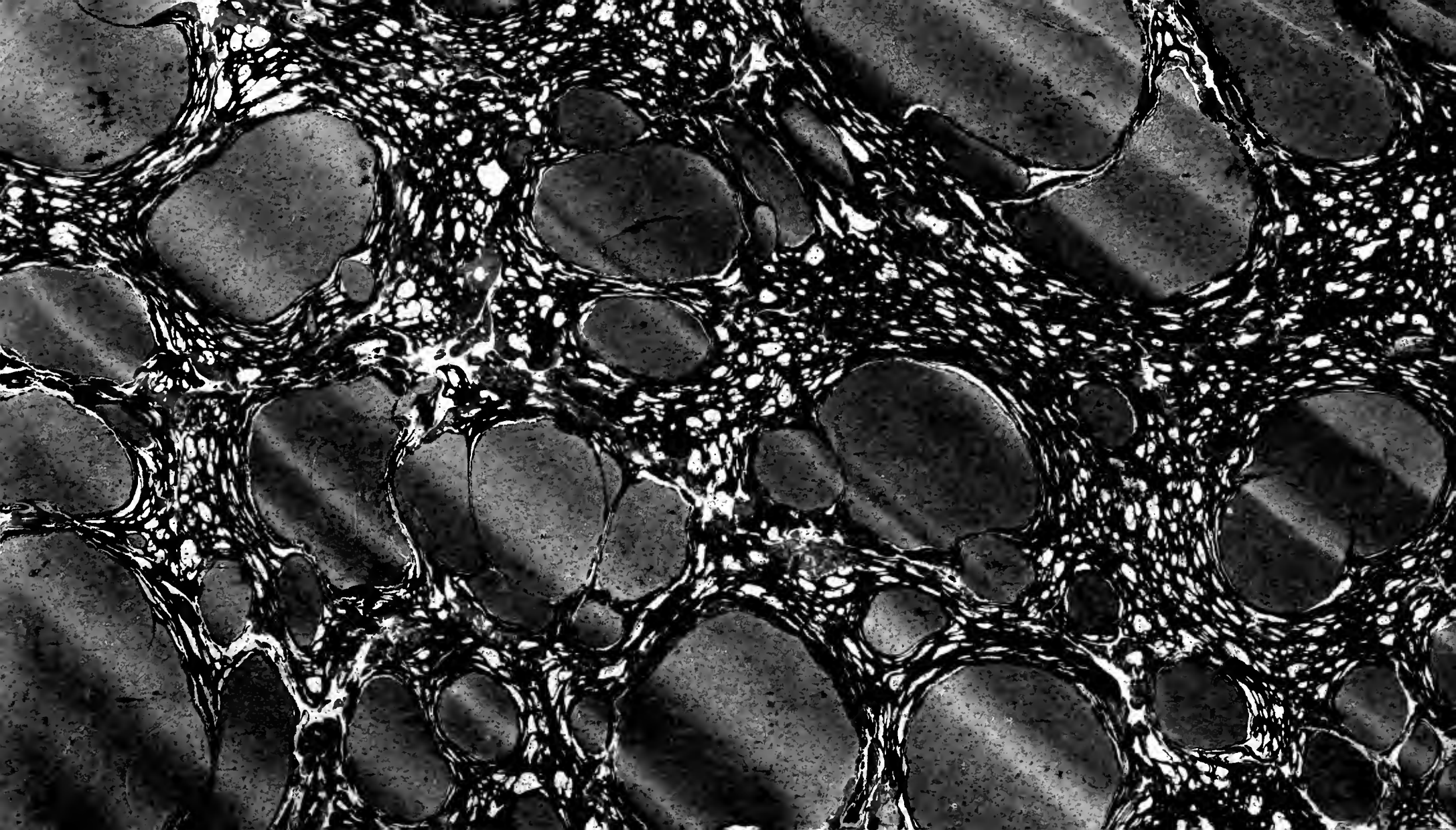

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